

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC134
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Name of Service:	Dripsey Pre-School Playgroup
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Address of Service:	11 Millview Terrace, Model Village, Dripsey, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P12 EP93
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Name of Registered Provider:	Triona Sheehan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	3	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Dripsey Pre-School Playgroup provides sessional care and education for children aged 2 to 6 years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is accommodated from 9.15am to 12.15pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year. An afternoon sessional service is not currently in operation at the setting.

Located in the village of Dripsey, the service operates from a two storey building, in a residential area. It consists of one care room, with adjacent children's sanitary facilities and a second break out room. A designated outdoor play area is available at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

At the time of inspection, there were 2 adults attached to the service. Both adults have attained a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Additional Information

A referral to the Fire Officer was made on 30 September 2025, in relation to the key locked fire exit doors within the premises.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
 - (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-
- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
 - (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
 - (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
 - (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The person in charge of operating the early years service was the registered provider.
 - (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the registered provider was working at the setting and remained available to facilitate the inspection process.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the two adults attached to the service were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (a) Four written and validated references were required in total. All four of the references on file were from past employers.
 - (b) None of the references had been provided by sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for both adults. However, the service did not adhere to the

re-vetting timeframes outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d) It was determined that police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the adults had each achieved a recognised award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

(8)
(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider was available to the children throughout the period of inspection.

(3) The adult child ratio was correct and maintained; there was one adult responsible for the direct care and education of three children, who were aged three to four and a half years.

(8)

(c) As the service was operated single handedly, an emergency contact person, who was familiar with the operation of the service, had been appointed to assist the registered provider, in the event of an emergency.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:*
- (b) *details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
 - (c) *details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
 - (d) *the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
 - (e) *the facilities available;*
 - (f) *the opening hours and fees;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) Information regarding the type of service provided and the age range of children accommodated, was available in writing.
 - (c) The adult child ratios were clearly documented.
 - (d) Details in relation to the service’s programme of care were outlined within the parents’ book.
 - (e) The available facilities were described in the parents’ information booklet.
 - (f) The hours of operation and the service fees were clearly set out in writing.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

- (1) *A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*
- (a) *each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- The mid-morning snack was noted to be calm and unhurried, with sufficient time allocated for the children to enjoy their food. Appropriate assistance was also ensured, for example, children were supported to open food packaging.
- Throughout the morning, the children’s reusable water bottles were stored within easy reach, on a low-level trolley.
- The children could freely access the adjacent sanitary facilities, as needed and the registered provider was observed to offer helpful reminders in relation to handwashing. The inspector was advised that all of the children were toilet trained.
- Any child who wished to rest or relax during the sessional period could avail of the cosy area, which was located within the main care room.

Supporting relationships:

- A warm and engaging atmosphere was evident within the care room. The registered provider communicated with the children in a low tone of voice and frequently acknowledged the children’s interests and activities.
- The children appeared confident in their surroundings and demonstrated familiarity with several aspects of the daily routine, such as settling in at arrival time and preparing for snack time.
- Minor disputes among the children were managed sensitively. For example, following a disagreement in relation to play materials, a child sought support and the registered provider responded by calmly discussing the issue with the children involved.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The tables and chairs provided within the care room were suited to the age and stage of development of the children in attendance and were in plentiful supply.
- Play resources were stored on low-set, open shelving or at floor level, which enabled children to independently select items of interest.
- Among the range of suitable materials on offer were jigsaws, train sets, building blocks, books, musical instruments, a farm set, hand held vehicles, art and craft materials, dolls and a play kitchen.

- The partially sheltered, outdoor play environment was directly accessible from the main care room and comprised a variety of surfaces. The space was resourced with equipment such as playhouses, mud kitchens, wall mounted blackboards, a climbing frame, a slide and a covered sand tray. Tables and chairs were also available for table top activities.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General safety:

- Unauthorised entry to the early years service was prevented.
- The designated outdoor play environment was enclosed by high-level walls and a secured gate, which minimised the likelihood of a child exiting, while unsupervised.
- Safe storage of cleaning agents was ensured.
- The first aid box was stored out of the children's reach.
- Cords from window blinds were secured with suitable tension devices.
- There were no cables or flexes accessible to the children.
- The television and the fire extinguishers were securely wall mounted.

Infection control:

- Liquid soap, disposable paper towels and a foot pedal operated bin were provided at the children's wash hand basins. It was noted that the children washed their hands before the snack break.
- The table used for the mid-morning snack was sanitised before use.
- The children's perishable snacks were stored in a refrigerator.

Fire safety:

- Fire exit signage was illuminated.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. The Garda vetting disclosure available for one of the adults was not dated within the previous three years, in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Notice, 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Infection control:

2. Warm running water was not available at the two wash hand basins in the children's sanitary facility, or at the wash hand basin in the staff sanitary facility. Recorded water temperatures ranged from 19.3°C to 19.5°C. This may impede effective handwashing. During discussion, the registered provider stated that the hot water had not been switched on.

Fire safety:

3. Key lock mechanisms were installed on the three fire exit doors within the premises. The doors were secured and the keys were stored on high-level wall hooks. It was acknowledged that this practice was in place to prevent the unsupervised exit of a child. However, key locked doors may delay or prevent a timely exit in the event of a fire. A referral was sent to the Fire Officer on 30 September 2025.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The written reply from the registered provider outlined that an application for the Garda vetting renewal has been submitted. As a preventive measure, the registered provider will check all Garda vetting, to ensure that it is consistently up to date.

Infection control:

2. A sign has been placed over the hot water switch, to ensure that it is turned on every morning before the children arrive. This will ensure that warm water will always be available for handwashing. in the childrens bathroom.

Fire safety:

3. Door sensor alarms have been ordered for the three doors, along with safety locks for the handles on the doors. These safety locks will not be easily opened by children, but can be easily opened by an adult and the children will be with an adult at all times. The registered provider has also stated that she will seek clarification from the fire officer in relation to the use of these safety locks.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. A copy of the Garda vetting disclosure.

Infection control:

2. Photographic evidence.

Fire safety:

3. A copy of the order summary for the door sensor alarms and replacement door handle locks.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the registered provider are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

(1) First Aid Responder (FAR) certification was available for the registered provider, who was present at the setting throughout the hours of operation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The available insurance certificate demonstrated that adequate cover was in place for up to 22 children to attend the sessional service at any one time. The policy was valid from 28 March 2025 until 27 March 2026.