

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC259
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Name of Service:	Martina's Playschool
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Address of Service:	The Old School House, Riverstown Community Centre, Glamire, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T45 W992
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Name of Registered Provider:	Martina Conroy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	09/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	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

Martina's Playschool is a privately owned, sessional category service, that is registered to accommodate children aged 2 to 6 years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme is facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, over 38 weeks of the year.

Located in an urban area of Glanmire, in Co Cork, the service is provided from a two-storey community centre. It consists of two care rooms, each with adjoining children's sanitary facilities. A kitchen, an office and staff sanitary facilities are also available.

Staffing

Eight adults are attached to the early years service and seven of these adults work directly with the children. This includes two adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme and one relief staff member. The registered provider is not involved in the day to day care of the children.

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff 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) A designated person in charge had been appointed to the early years service. A named deputy had also been assigned and was available to deputise in her absence.
- (b) The person in charge facilitated the duration of the inspection process. The staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or the deputy was consistently available at the setting, during operational hours.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the eight adults attached to the service were assessed.
- (a) Sixteen written and validated references were required in total. Of these, 10 were from past employers.
- (b) A further six references on file were from sources other than previous employers and had been validated.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all eight staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was held for two of the adults, who had resided in other jurisdictions for periods that exceeded six consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.
- (4) Seven of the adults, including the registered provider, had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, to a minimum of level 5, on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Copies of the corresponding certificates were held on file. The eighth adult had obtained a Letter of Eligibility to Practice.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) At the time of inspection, it was observed that there was an adequate number of staff working directly with children.
- (3) A sessional category service was provided for children and the correct adult to child ratios were maintained. In the Senior room, there were 3 adults working directly with 17 children, aged 3 to 4 ½ years. The Junior room was also attended by 17 children, who were aged 3 to 4 years and there were 3 adults working directly with these children.

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:*
- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Information was available in relation to the names, positions and qualifications of each staff member attached to the service. Photo identification and curricula vitae were also provided.
- (j) The person in charge advised the inspector that none of the children who attended the service were currently in receipt of medication. A record template was in place for staff to document the administration of

medication, should it be required.

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 mealtime routine in the Senior room took place in a pleasant atmosphere. It was noted that the children chatted freely, as the adults sat and ate alongside them and provided appropriate assistance.
- In both care rooms, reusable water bottles, which belonged to the children, were maintained where they could be easily seen and retrieved by the children, as needed, throughout the day.
- As sanitary facilities were provided adjoining the care rooms, children were noted to access and utilise these areas independently, with prompts and reminders provided by the adults, as were deemed necessary. The inspector was advised that nappy changing was carried out in response to the children's individual needs.
- Each care room had a cosy area, which was a designated space for children to sit, read or rest during the preschool session. These areas were observed to be well utilised by the children.
- Over the course of the morning, the adults were observed to interact and communicate with the children in low tones of voice and offered comfort and reassurance, as the need arose.
- Within the care rooms, the children had adequate space to move about freely and initiate their chosen pursuits, which included construction play, jigsaw making, sand play and card games.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- Children brought their own snacks for the mid-morning meal break. Examples were noted to include sandwiches, crackers, sausage rolls, yogurts and a variety of fruit, such as chopped grapes, blueberries and apples, with water to drink.
- The person in charge advised the inspector that none of the children had any food allergies or intolerances. However, some dietary requirements were applicable. In managing this, the relevant information was provided to parents, in advance of any celebrations at the setting, that involved food.
- The service chose to implement a nut free policy and this was stated in the healthy eating policy.
- During discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that if a child became hungry outside of the allocated mealtimes, they could select a snack from their lunch box. This was in keeping with the healthy eating policy and was observed in practice in the Junior room, during the morning of the inspection. An additional supply of snacks was also maintained at the service.

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:

- Wall mounted storage was provided for fire extinguishers.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children's reach, in the Junior room.

Infection control:

- Warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels were easily accessible at each of the wash hand basins across the service. Handwashing was observed to be carried out in the Senior room, before the mid-morning snack.
- Refrigerated storage was provided for the children's perishable snacks.

- The children's bags were stored appropriately. A table was utilised for this purpose in the Junior room and hook storage was in use in the Senior room.
- Disposable aprons and gloves were available for nappy changing procedures.

Administration of medication:

- The temperature reducing medication maintained at the setting was found to be securely stored, out of the children's reach and was in-date.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. While it was acknowledged that the service's access doors were adequately secured against the risk of unauthorised entry, there was a risk that a child may exit unsupervised. In the Senior room, the fire exit door that opened out onto the footpath and steps at the front of the building, had a push bar at child height, that could be easily opened. These steps led to a main road. It was observed that a retractable, mesh safety gate was fitted on the interior side, however, this was not engaged until the inspector alerted the staff to the easily openable door. It was also noted that it may be possible for a child to crawl underneath this safety gate and reach the fire exit door.

Infection control:

2. During free play time in the Junior room, three of the children did not wash their hands before choosing snacks to eat from their lunchboxes. This increased the risk of cross infection and was at variance with the service's infection control policy, which stated that children's hands should be washed before eating.
3. In the staff sanitary facility, the bin provided for the disposal of nappies was not foot pedal operated. Direct contact with the lid of the bin was therefore required in order to dispose of nappies, which increased the risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The written response outlined that a new alarm system has been installed on the fire exit door, which will emit a loud ring when the door opens.

Infection control:

2. A group conversation has taken place between staff and the children about the importance of handwashing before eating. The 'Rufus handwashing programme' was revisited and visuals are displayed in the classroom. Staff members were reminded to be extra vigilant when children choose to eat outside

of the usual snack time, ensuring that handwashing takes place before they do so. As a preventive measure, staff will be regularly reminded about hand washing before meals.

3. The bin has been replaced with a foot pedal operated bin. It will be ensured that nappy bins are always pedal operated.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Photographic evidence in relation to the door sensor alarm.

Infection control:

2. Photographs of the handwashing guidance visuals.
3. A photograph of the pedal operated bin.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted 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) Current First Aid Responder (FAR) certification was available for one staff member and the staff roster indicated that this adult was on duty, throughout the service's hours of operation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was in place. The available certificate had an expiry date of 27 March 2026 and stated that the service was insured to provide sessional care, for up to 40 children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) Adequate sanitary facilities were in place at the setting. Two children's toilets and two wash hand basins were provided adjoining each care room, which amounted to four children's toilets and four wash hand basins in total. The staff sanitary facility consisted of two toilets, two wash hand basins and a nappy changing unit.