

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC347
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Name of Service:	Ringlee House Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P24 DX62
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Hannigan, Nicole Victory
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM	29
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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 & B Fraher
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

This early years service is registered to provide full day care, to children aged 0 to 6 years, between 7.45am and 6.00pm daily. Options of part time and sessional care are also available. In addition, the setting operates a registered school age service. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is accommodated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, over a 38-week annual period and the service is open 51 weeks of the year.

The childcare facility is situated in a residential area of Cobh, in Co Cork. The two-storey premises is a purpose-built extension onto a private residence, with four care rooms in total. On the ground floor, there are two care rooms, with adjoining sanitary facilities and a kitchen. Two further care rooms and additional sanitary facilities are located on the first floor. There is a separate building at the rear of the main building, which is used for storage and also includes a staff sanitary facility. Additional storage space is provided in the adjoining building, along with a second staff sanitary facility. The children have the use of an outdoor play space on site.

Staffing

The service employs 14 adults, 13 of whom are involved in the direct care of the children who attend. This includes the registered providers and a relief staff member. One staff member is assigned to kitchen duties and does not work directly with the children. Twelve adults were on duty at the setting on the day of the inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9: Management and recruitment, Regulation 11: Staffing levels, Regulation 16: Records of a preschool service, Regulation 19: Health, welfare and development of a preschool child, Regulation 23: Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 25: First aid, Regulation 26: Fire safety measures, Regulation 28: Insurance and Regulation 29: Premises, however on inspection, additional non-compliance which posed a risk, was identified under Regulation 10: Policies, procedures of a preschool service. This finding is outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 registered provider was the person in charge and there was a named deputy who could deputise as required.
 - (b) The registered provider and deputy were on duty at the service when the inspectors arrived. The staff roster indicated that either the registered provider or the deputy was on duty at all times, during the hours of operation.
 - (c) There was clear evidence of the management structure in place and this was displayed on the wall.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with

the registered provider, it was determined that three new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection, which was carried out on 23 January 2024. A total of three files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for eight staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal, were requested for review.

- (a) Four of the references available were from a past employer and three of these references were validated.
 - (b) Two of the references were from a source other than a past employer and had been validated.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were on file for the three adults. Garda vetting in respect of an additional eight staff had also been renewed, in line with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was not required for any of the three adults, as they had not lived outside of the State for longer than six consecutive months, while over the age of 18.
- (4) Two of the three adults held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) One reference in respect of one staff member had not been validated. Non-compliance in relation to unvalidated references was also noted at the previous inspection on 23 January 2024. The preventive action submitted at the time stated that the service would continue to improve on maintaining and updating staff files. However, this remained an issue.
 - (4) A certificate of qualification confirming completion of a major award at level 5 or above, was not available for one staff member, who worked directly with the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a) In her written reply, the registered provider stated that the validation was completed after the inspection and that the service has been working on maintaining staff files. The reference validation was an oversight and the registered provider will continue to improve on keeping files up to date.
 - (4) The CAPA response outlined that the relevant paperwork was sent to the DCDE, to have the qualification recognised. Subsequent to this, the registered provider advised that a letter of qualification recognition could not be issued and stated that the adult will not work directly with the children, until the qualification is

obtained. As a preventive measure, component certificates will be checked in future, to ensure they meet the requirement for a full award.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(a) A copy of the reference validation.

(4) The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was assessed. Part (9)(2)(a) has addressed the non-compliance identified. In relation to (9)(4), as the adult is no longer involved in the direct care of the children, this is accepted in meeting the requirement of the regulation. Evidence of attainment of a recognised award in early childhood care and education, must be in place before the adult can resume working directly with the preschool children.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The policy on safe sleep did not include the following:

- It did not describe the sudden infant death syndrome prevention guidance and protective measures for children under 12 months.
- It did not describe the sleep facilities for children of all ages. Only reference to children aged over 2 years was included.

Therefore, the above policy may not adequately guide the staff in their care practices.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The safe sleep policy has been updated accordingly. It now describes the sleep facilities for children of all ages, as well as protective measures for children under 12 months. Policies will be reviewed more regularly, to ensure they are up to date and that staff are guided correctly.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the updated safe sleep policy.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider is accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.

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.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were available to the children.

(2) Taking into consideration the age range of the children present in the service and the duration of their stay, the adult to child ratios were maintained in line with the required ratios:

- On the morning of the inspection, 10 adults worked with the 47 children present, who were aged 9 months to 5 years.
- The 29 children present in the afternoon were aged 9 months to 5 years and were cared for by 7 adults.

(8)

(a) There were at least two adults rostered in the service for the duration of the hours of operation.

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;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, deputy and staff were observed to be kept in the staff recruitment files, in the service.
 - (i) The weekly staff roster was presented to the inspector on arrival and contained the hours of work of each staff member and included all staff breaks.

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:

- During the inspection, a mid-morning snack and lunch were observed to be facilitated. These mealtimes were noted to be relaxed and unhurried, with sufficient time allocated. Staff members sat with the children, encouraged conversation and promptly assisted them to open food packaging and containers, as needed.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children both during and outside of the designated mealtimes.
- The inspector was advised that nappy changing was carried out frequently and as needed. Older children were observed to access the toilet facilities independently.

- Sleep was facilitated throughout the day in Room 1. This was a child led practice and staff worked in partnership with parents to ensure consistency. Each child's sleep needs were observed to be met when they indicated the need for same. For example, children were placed to sleep when signs of tiredness were recognised by staff. After lunch, a scheduled nap time was also accommodated in this room, for any child in the service who wished to sleep.
- Within the care rooms, the children had adequate space to move about freely and initiate their chosen pursuits.
- It was noted that the children who attended Room 2 were dressed appropriately in coats and wellies, as they carried out play activities in the outdoor area.

Physical and material environment:

- The children's indoor environments were suitably equipped with child sized tables and chairs, which supported them to comfortably explore play materials and participate in various aspects of the daily routine, such as mealtimes and tabletop activities.
- A broad range of the children's artwork was prominently displayed throughout the setting, along with birthday displays. This contributed to the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- The available materials across the care rooms promoted exploration and learning through various types of play. For example:
 - Dolls and accessories, play kitchens, toy diggers and animal figures supported imaginary play.
 - Plastic brick activity tables and larger building blocks were provided for construction play.
 - The extension of fine motor skills was promoted through the availability of jigsaws, magnet tiles and connectable shapes.
 - Creativity was encouraged through a range of art and craft materials.
 - Musical instruments were available to support sensory development.
- Outdoors, the children's active play, gross motor development and exploration were facilitated. The designated play area comprised both grass and shock absorbing surfaces and included seesaws, a selection of ride on toys, mud kitchens, digging toys and a large climbing frame, with a slide.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. While it was acknowledged that Rooms 1, 3 and 4 each had a clearly identifiable cosy area, the rest area in Room 2 required development, in order to adequately meet the children's need for rest and relaxation. A sofa was provided in the corner of the room, with no additional furnishings or books available, to create an inviting rest area for the children.
2. Children in Room 1 did not have access to outdoor play on the day of inspection, despite weather conditions being appropriate to do so. Staff members advised that these children did not access the outdoor play area during the winter months and stated that the children last went outdoors before Christmas. Not taking the children outside daily does not allow access to fresh air and a change of environment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A book box has been added near the sofa, so that children can read a book while resting. A box of blankets has also been placed in this area, so that children can wrap up warmly, when sitting there. Staff have been working hard to develop the classrooms since the inspection. All rooms have been repainted and there are new shelves, equipment and toys in the rooms. The service will continue to ensure that the care rooms and cosy areas, cater for the needs of all the children.
2. The written reply outlined that there had been a lot of rainfall and low temperatures in the two weeks since reopening after Christmas. A lot of new children also began attending the Baby room in January and were settling. The children in question do go outside, but more so in the afternoon. These children have a change in environment at 12.00pm, when they are either going for a nap or moving over to Room 2. The service will put more emphasis on going outside during the morning.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence.
2. The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the statements and partial evidence submitted, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met.

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:

- The high-level door handles on the care room doors reduced the risk of a child exiting the rooms unsupervised.
- The temperature of the water at the children's wash hand basins was thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C. Recorded water temperature readings ranged from 32.9°C to 36°C.
- Cleaning agents were safely stored out of reach of the children.

Infection control:

- The children's wash hand basins were suitably equipped with warm running water, liquid soap and electric hand dryers.
- The children were observed to wash their hands after using the toilet, after outdoor play and before mealtimes.
- Individual coat hooks were in use to store the children's bags and coats.
- In Room 3, staff ensured that the tables were sanitised before the mid-morning snack.
- Perishable foods, such as yogurts and cheese, were refrigerated prior to snack time. This reduced the risk of food spoilage.

Safe sleep:

- The air temperature of Room 1 was recorded at 18°C, while one child was asleep. The room temperatures were maintained between 16°C and 20°C, as required for children under 12 months.
- Staff were noted to maintain sleep records in relation to children's, colour, breathing and position, at 10-minute intervals and these records were correctly documented.

Fire safety:

- The service's fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.
- Wall mounted storage of firefighting equipment was ensured.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. While it was acknowledged that the main entrance door was secured when not in use, unauthorised access onto the premises was not prevented. Both entrance gates could be opened from the exterior and a subsequent unsecured gate at the side of the building provided access to Room 1, as the door to this room was also unsecured.
2. There was an unanchored shelving unit in Room 1. This was accessible to the children and posed a safety risk, should it fall over or fall on top of a child if climbed upon.

Infection control:

The following observed practices increased the risk of cross infection:

3. In the sanitary facility adjoining Room 2, the nappy changing mat on the changing unit was torn, which impeded effective cleaning. A second changing mat was stored on the floor and was visibly dirty. Non-compliance in relation to a torn nappy changing mat was also found at the previous inspection on 23 January 2024.
4. Some of the bins in the service were not suitable for the hygienic disposal of waste as follows:
 - The foot pedal operated bin in the sanitary facility adjoining Room 2 was broken.
 - A foot pedal operated bin was unavailable in the staff sanitary facility adjoining the storage room; an open waste bin and a swing lidded bin were in use.
 - The lid on the pedal operated bin, in the nappy changing area adjoining Room 1, had become detached. Therefore, staff members had to make direct contact with the lid of the bin in order to open it, as was observed during a nappy changing procedure.
5. The handwashing facilities in the second staff toilet facility did not support effective handwashing. A communal hand towel was provided and warm running water was unavailable. A water temperature of 12.8°C was recorded at both wash hand basins.
6. During an observed nappy changing procedure, the child's hands were not washed after having their nappy changed. It was also noted that the service's nappy changing policy did not include the need to wash children's hands after nappy changing.
7. The sanitary facility adjoining Room 1 was observed to be used as a storage area for children's outdoor clothing and contained a broken toy, which was not in use. The inappropriate use of sanitary facilities for storage was also observed during the previous inspection on 23 January 2024.

Safe sleep:

8. One child under the age of 2 years was observed to sleep on a stackable bed in Room 1. Tusla's guidance for the early learning and care sector on sleep position for children under 24 months, states that the use of floor mats or stackable beds are not conducive to sleep, for children in this age range. The service's sleep policy stated that children over 2 would have access to stackable beds, however, there was no reference to sleep provision for children aged under 2 years. The issue of unsuitable sleep equipment was also noted during the previous inspection on 23 January 2024. The CAPA response at the time stated that children under the age of 2 would be placed to sleep in a cot. However, this was not found to be the case.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The written response stated that a new lock has been placed on the back gate and that this will ensure that all entrances into the building are secure.
2. The unit in Room 1 has been secured. This removes the risk of the unit falling on top of a child.

Infection control:

3. A new changing mat has been ordered for this changing unit. Two mats have been ordered, to prevent this issue from reoccurring and the registered provider will order more mats when the spare mat is used.
4. The bins have been replaced in Room 1, Room 2 and in the staff sanitary facility. The new bins will prevent this issue from reoccurring. Staff have also been encouraged to inform management when the bins are no longer serving their purpose.
5. The towel has been removed and replaced with paper towels. The water heating system has been functioning in that part of the building since the inspection, meaning that hot water is available. Staff will turn on the water heating that supplies that part of the building every morning, to ensure that warm water is available.
6. The nappy changing policy has been updated to include washing the child's hands after nappy changing. This is mentioned on the nappy changing procedure, displayed on the wall in the nappy changing room. Staff usually do wash the children's hands after nappy changing and have been reminded of the procedure that is displayed on the wall.
7. All items have been removed from the sanitary facility. As the other part of the building is now available to the service and can be used for storage, this will eliminate the issue.

Safe sleep:

8. The child in question has since turned 2 years old, but was moved back into a cot until his second birthday. The safe sleep policy states that children under the age of 2 will remain in a cot until after their second birthday.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Photographic evidence.
2. Photographic evidence.

Infection control:

3. A screen shot of the invoice for the changing mats.
4. Photographic evidence.
5. Photographic evidence.
6. A copy of the updated nappy changing policy and a photograph of the nappy changing procedure.
7. Photographic evidence.

Safe sleep:

8. The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective actions implemented by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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.*
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*
- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
 - (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Current First Aid Response (FAR) certification was available for two staff members and the staff roster indicated that at least one of these adults was on duty, while the service was in operation.

(2)

- (a) Three first aid boxes were provided. Sufficient supplies were maintained and the first aid boxes were stored in locations that were out of the children's reach, while easily accessible by adults.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available throughout the hours of operation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
 - (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
 - (a) The monthly fire drills undertaken at the setting had been documented and were presented for review. It was noted that the most recent fire drill took place on 12 January 2026.
 - (b) The certificate of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that this was carried out in September 2025 and the certification of testing for the fire alarm was dated 29 September 2025.
- (4) The action to be taken in the event of a fire was clearly displayed in writing.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate indicated that sufficient cover was in place for the provision of a full day care service and the policy was valid until 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) The service's sanitary facilities met the requirements in relation to the number of children attending:

- Adjoining Room 1, there was one nappy changing area, with one wash hand basin. A separate adjoining sanitary facility, equipped with two toilets and two wash hand basins, was also provided, however, this was not in use.
- The sanitary facility accessible from Room 2 had two toilets and two wash hand basins in place. As none of the children who attended Room 2 were toilet trained at the time of inspection, a nappy changing unit was provided in one of the toilet cubicles.
- Room 3 and Room 4 each had an adjoining sanitary facility and both were equipped with two toilets and two wash hand basins.
- Two separate toilet facilities were provided for staff use. The sanitary facility adjoining the storage room, at the rear of the building, consisted of one toilet and one wash hand basin. The second sanitary facility in the adjoining premises consisted of one toilet and two wash hand basins.

Non-Compliance Information

(c) The lighting in the nappy changing area in Room 1 was not functioning correctly. The light was flickering and required replacing.

(d) In the sanitary facility adjoining Room 3, a door hinge on one of the swing doors was broken and was being held in place with black tape.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) The light in Room 1 has been replaced.

(d) The toilet cubicle door in Room 3 has been fixed. The service will keep on top of maintenance. The registered provider had been waiting for assistance to have the light repaired and the hinge replaced.

Supporting documentation submitted

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(c) Photographic evidence was submitted in relation to parts (c) and (d).

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was deemed to meet regulatory compliance with Regulation 29.