

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC380
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Name of Service:	St. Mary's Preschool
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Address of Service:	St. Mary's National School, Orilia Terrace, Cobh, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P24 FR98
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lorraine Peterson
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	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

St. Mary's Preschool is registered to provide early years care and education to children aged 2 to 6 years, on a sessional basis. The service is open Monday to Friday, from 8.45am to 12.15pm and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is accommodated over 38 weeks annually.

The pre-school operates from a room within St. Mary's National School, in the town of Cobh in Co Cork. There are adjoining sanitary facilities for children and an outdoor play area is located beside the building.

Staffing

The service employs five adults, three of whom were present at the time of the inspection. The registered provider is not service based and a relief staff member works in a neighbouring service. A relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education has been attained by all five of the adults.

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) The early years setting had a named person in charge and a deputy, who could deputise as required.
- (b) Both the person in charge and the deputy were available at the service throughout the inspection process.
Review of the staff roster, from 1 September 2025 to 17 September 2025, also demonstrated that the service was operated with the person in charge and the deputy present.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the five adults attached to the service were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (a) There were six written and validated references on file from past employers.
- (b) Four references had been obtained from sources other than previous employers, with records of validation in place for two of these records.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Not applicable. Following a review of the staff files, there was no evidence that international police vetting was required.
- (4) There was evidence that the five staff members had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(b) Records of validation were unavailable for two of the references held in respect of one adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply stated that both references have been validated. Going forward, references will be validated as they are received, prior to being filed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the reference validations.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was assessed and 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.*
- (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) Over the course of the inspection, an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children.
- (3) The adult child ratio met the requirements of the regulation. Three adults were working directly with 16 children, who were aged 2 ½ to 4 years.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*
- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
 - (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
 - (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
 - (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
 - (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*

(f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;

(g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

A sample of 10 registration forms was reviewed as part of the inspection process.

(1) The registration forms contained the required information under parts (c) (d) (e) (f) and (g) of this regulation.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The child's date of birth was not included on one of the records.
 - (b) Six of the records did not detail the date on which the child began attending the service.
 - (h) Information regarding the child's immunisation status was unavailable on 1 of the 10 records reviewed.
 - (i) Written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment in the event of an emergency, was not provided on three of the child records.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (a) The response from the registered provider outlined that the child's date of birth has been entered. Each document will be checked as it is received and amended where necessary.
 - (b) The six start dates have been entered. As a preventive measure, there is a checklist in place, which will be checked by a nominated staff member.
 - (h) The immunisation record has been added. Further checks for any missing information will be completed when forms are received from parents.
 - (i) Written consent has been obtained in relation to these three records. As stated, further checks for any missing information will be completed when forms are received from parents.

Supporting documentation submitted

Screen shots in relation to the updated information on the child record forms were forwarded.

Summary Comment

Following the corrective action implemented by the registered provider, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met.

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)

Physical and material environment:

- Wall hangings in the care room reflected the children in attendance and were noted to include a birthday display and examples of their recently completed artwork.
- The available child sized tables and chairs were suitable for the children's use during table top activities, circle time and mealtime routines.
- Display units were set low, which allowed the children to freely access play and learning materials. The range of said play resources supported key developmental areas, such as fine motor skills, language, cognition, creativity and imagination. For example, there were:
 - jigsaws
 - connectable shapes, magnet tiles and building blocks
 - books
 - art and craft materials
 - a well-equipped home corner, with play kitchens and utensils
 - train sets
 - action figures and hand held vehicles
- The outdoor play area provided opportunities for more active play and gross motor development, through the availability of climbing frames, slides, ride on toys, balls and a goal post. Equipment such as a mud kitchen and a sand tray promoted exploratory and sensory play, while playhouses and hand held vehicles were provided for imaginary play.

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

- The service promoted healthy eating and encouraged parents to supply nutritious foods for their children’s meal breaks. The children’s snacks were noted to include sandwiches, crackers, cheese, yogurts and a variety of fruit, with water to drink. Suitable crockery and cutlery were available for the children’s use as required.
- While the service did operate a nut free policy, the inspector was informed that none of the children who currently attended, had any dietary requirements or allergies.
- During discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that if a child became hungry outside of the allocated mealtimes, they could choose a snack from their lunch box. The service also maintained a supply of foods such as cereal and fruit, which could be offered to children if they became hungry, or required additional snacks during meal breaks.

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:

- A key lock mechanism on the exterior of the main entrance door, reduced the risk of unauthorised access to the service.
- High-level fencing, gates and the building walls enclosed the outdoor play area.
- The first aid box was stored at a height that was inaccessible to children.
- There were no blind cords on the windows.
- The available firefighting equipment was safely wall mounted.
- Landing mats were in place in the outdoor play area, which provided soft fall surfaces for children.

Infection control:

- At the children’s wash hand basins, there was a supply of warm running water, liquid soap, paper towels and foot pedal operated bins. These facilities supported the practice of effective handwashing. It was noted that handwashing routines took place after the children had used the toilet and before the designated mealtime.
- Cleaning records were on display in the care room and had been completed to date.
- The care room was adequately ventilated. High-level open windows allowed for the circulation of fresh air.

Fire safety:

- Fire exit signage was illuminated and the fire exit was free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. Cleaning agents, such as floor cleaners and degreasers, were not maintained out of the children’s reach, which posed a risk of a child accidentally ingesting a harmful substance. The low-level cupboards within the care room that were used to store these items were unsecured. It was noted that the restrictive opening devices which had been fitted to the cupboards were broken.
2. The cable from the wall mounted television had not been secured. While it was acknowledged that the cable had been raised to a higher level, it was still accessible to the children. This posed a risk of injury to a child.
3. Two of the windows, which had handles that were accessible to children, were not adequately secured against the risk of a child exiting unsupervised. It was noted that these windows could be opened wide enough to allow a child to exit out onto the school grounds. The inspector was informed that the key used to secure both of these windows had broken inside one of window locks and that repair work was awaited.

Infection control:

4. The available refrigerator was not used to store the children’s perishable foods prior to the mid-morning snack, which increased the risk of food spoilage. Snacks such as cheese, yogurts and ham sandwiches were noted to have been stored in the children’s bags up until the meal break.
5. The children’s bags were not suitably stored, which increased the risk of cross infection. Upon the inspector’s arrival, it was noted that the children’s bags were stored on the floor in the care room. It was acknowledged that some of these bags were placed on the wall hooks once this was brought to the

attention of the person in charge. However, the other bags remained on the floor and all of the bags were subsequently placed on the floor before the children were collected.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. In her written reply, the registered provider stated that new cabinet safety locks have been purchased and fitted. As a preventive measure, more regular safety checks will be ensured.
2. The TV cables have been placed in trunking and a safety checklist is now in place.
3. Two new window handle/ locks were purchased and fitted. As a preventive measure, school maintenance will be followed up regularly.

Infection control:

4. Perishable foods will be placed in the refrigerator daily. The children's bags will be checked for perishable foods, after their arrival.
5. A new trolley has been purchased to store children's bags. A room checklist is now in place to ensure this will not reoccur.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted in relation to all of the corrective actions.

Summary Comment

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

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

(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

(e) The sanitary facilities available for the children's use were adequate in accommodating the number of children who attended. Adjoining the care room, there were two toilets and two wash hand basins accessible to the children. Staff had the use of a separate sanitary facility, located within the national school, which consisted of one toilet and one wash hand basin. The inspector was advised that all of the children were either toilet trained, or in the process of toilet training. Therefore, a nappy changing facility was not required.

Non-Compliance Information

(c) One of the lights in the children's sanitary facility was not functioning. As a result, the toilet cubicle where this light bulb was located was dimly lit and children's visibility was reduced when using this toilet.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The light has been replaced by the caretaker. This had been requested previously.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 29.