

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC445
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Name of Service:	Tots & Co Preschool
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Address of Service:	Hayfield House, Clover Hill, Kilnagleary, Carrigaline, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P43 CY63
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jamie Gallagher
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	02/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	25
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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:	M Creagh
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

Tots & Co. Preschool is a privately run early years service registered to provide full day care, part time and sessional care to children aged from two to six years. The current opening hours are from 7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday inclusive. The service is based in a residential area and operates from the ground floor of a two-storey building that was purposely adapted as a childcare facility.

There are two care rooms in operation, namely; the Foxes room and the Little Cubs room. There is a designated sensory area and enclosed outdoor play area.

Staffing

The service has 10 staff attached to it, not all of whom are working at all times. The registered provider does not work directly with children in the service. On the day of inspection five staff were working directly with the children. All of the staff working in the service providing care to the pre-school children held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

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 15: Record of a Pre- School Child, Regulation 19: Health, Welfare and Development of Child, Regulation 21: Equipment and Materials, Regulation 23: Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 28: Insurance and Regulation 29: Premises; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person to deputise in her absence as required.
 - (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the person in charge was on duty to assist with the inspection process and she remained on duty for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) The recruitment records in relation to each of the 10 adults attached to the service were inspected.
- (a) Of the 20 references required, there were 17 references from previous employers on file with records of validation.

(b) Of the 20 references required, there were three references on file from a source other than a previous employer with records of validation.

(c) Garda vetting was on file for each of the 10 adults. The service had demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available on file for five adults who resided outside the jurisdiction of Ireland for greater than six consecutive months.

(4) The nine adults employed to work directly with the children had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification as deemed by the Minister with copies of the relevant qualifications on file.

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 person in charge ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working with the pre-school children at all times to meet the needs of the children in attendance.

(2) The adult child ratios on the day of inspection met the requirements of the regulations as follows:

Morning:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Little Cubs room	15	2

(3 to 5 years)		
Foxes room (2 to 4 years)	11	2

Afternoon:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Little Cubs room (3 to 5 years)	14	2
Foxes room (2 to 4 years)	11	2

The person in charge was also available to provide cover in the care rooms.

(8) (a) The registered provider did ensure that a minimum of two adults were always on the premises during the hours of operation.

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

(1) A sample of 10 children's record were assessed, and all records were completed and contained the required information outlined from (a) to (i).

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

BASIC NEEDS:

- The snacks and meals on the day of inspection were served at appropriate times. Assistance was given to the children that required help with cutting up the food and children were observed to be self-sufficient where possible. The staff were observed to sit with the children during mealtimes, while chatting to the children and demonstrating positive social skills. The inspector observed that plates were cleared and where a child desired more, staff obtained it.
- Children were able to access their drinks throughout the day; the children's reusable water bottles were stored on low-level shelves.
- Cutlery and crockery were provided as appropriate for snack and mealtime.
- Children were observed handwashing before snack time. Staff supported and encouraged children to be independent, developing each child's self-help skills.
- The children had several opportunities for outdoor play during their time in the service.
- Both care rooms included a cosy area, for any child who may need to take time to rest.
- A sensory area was available off the Foxes room.
- The spacious layout of the care rooms and outdoor area supported children to move freely within their environments and to actively engage in their chosen activity.
- The children were encouraged to use sanitary facilities independently, with supervision and verbal reminders provided as needed.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

- The children were cared for by the same team of staff each day, which supported the development of secure relationships between the children and the carers.
- When a child was observed to require comfort in the Little Cubs room, a staff member cuddled them and read them a story. Once comforted they were able to return to playing.
- Family trees were displayed in both rooms which supported the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- The staff were observed to speak with parents on drop off and collections ensuring they were informed of the activities within the service. Any additional updates were communicated via email and a communication application platform.
- The staff demonstrated sensitivity to the children and were comforting and kind when speaking with the children.
- Children were supported as needed, with staff listening to the children, respecting their feelings and supporting them to resolve minor conflicts with their friends. Positive behaviours observed by staff, such as sharing were reinforced with recognition and praise for the positive action.

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 service was equipped with suitable furniture, play equipment and materials in adequate quantities for the number of children attending, and their ages and stages of development. Furniture included child height tables for dining and tabletop activities. There were chairs suitable for use by toddlers, young children and adults. Child size bench seats were available in the outdoor area. Age-appropriate equipment included dress up clothes, books, jigsaws, play kitchen, a variety of hand help vehicles, a range of art and craft materials, shape sorters, small world toys and construction toys. The children had access to sensory toys and resources such as a coloured rice box and a sand box.
- There was a designated sensory area, attached to the Foxes room.
- Open shelving units that were accessible to the children were available and used for toy display and storage in both care rooms.
- The children's artwork was displayed.

- Outdoors, the children were observed to engage with a range of equipment such as slides, playhouse, sand tray, planter boxes, tunnels, football goals, wheeled toys. Additional resources included a wall mounted activity board, seating areas, water tray, chalk area and basketball net. There was access to ride on toys and bikes. Helmets were worn by children when using this equipment. A covered porch area was available where children could play in all weathers.

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 front door of the service was secured with an electromagnetic lock. This minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the service.
- The outdoor play area, at the back of the building was secured with high fencing and gates.
- Blind cords and windows were secured and safe on the day of inspection.
- The cleaning agents were stored on high shelving or secured cupboards, out of the reach of children.
- The glass door had art displayed on it which indicated its presence to the children attending.
- Toys and play equipment were safe for the age group using them, in good condition, and free from pinch and crush points, exposed bolts or sharp edges.

Infection Control:

- Staff were observed to clean the tables before and after mealtimes with a suitable disinfectant.
- The care rooms and sanitary facilities were adequately ventilated by natural and mechanical ventilation.
- Wash hand basins were supplied with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- There were pedal operated bins available throughout the service.
- All coats and bags were stored off the ground on wall hooks, minimising contact and cross infection.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.
- Anti- febrile medication held at the setting was found to be inaccessible to children, in- date and appropriately labelled.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were illuminated with appropriate signage.
- Firefighting equipment was suitably fixed to the walls.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The water temperature at the handwashing basin in the Little Cubs room was recorded 45.1 °C and in the Foxes room, posing a scalding risk. On discussion with the registered provider, he planned to adjust the thermostat accordingly.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider took immediate steps to rectify the water temperature. A plumber was called and reset the temperature to a safe level. A sink and taps were replaced in Foxes room with a mixer tap. Staff are now monitoring and recording daily water temperatures to ensure that temperatures remain at a safe level.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

A photo of the new sink with a mixer tap, and a screenshot of the daily water temperature monitoring form were submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken have met the regulatory requirement.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had a current insurance certificate which outlined that adequate insurance was available for 33 preschool children to attend the full day care service. The insurance cover commenced on 28th March 2025 and expired 27th March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (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

- (a) The building appeared to be of stable and sound structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The internal and external doors were secured as required and the outdoor area was secured with high fencing and gates. This prevented any child gaining access to the car park and prevented unauthorised adults from gaining access to the children.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, stale smells, or stuffiness.
- (d) The indoor and outdoor areas were well maintained, and routine cleaning schedules were in place and up to date.
- (e) The service had adequate and suitable sanitary facilities available for the number of children attending.