

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC457
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Name of Service:	Vicarstown Playschool
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Address of Service:	Kileen, Vicarstown, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P32 KX33
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Name of Registered Provider:	Eileen Murphy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square Mallow Co Cork P51DD5Y
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Inspection undertaken by:	J Dennehy & J Russell
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Title:	Inspection Registration Mangers
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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

Vicarstown Playschool is a private early years sessional service that is in operation since 1997. The service is located in a rural area in Co Cork. The service is registered to cater for children from 2 to 6 years and attending the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). The opening hours are from 9:00 to 12:00 each morning, Monday to Friday and is operational 38 weeks of the year. The service is connected to the registered providers house and the children have access to an outdoor area at the front and side of the building. The service contains two interconnected playrooms and has adjoining sanitary facilities for the children. Staff sanitary facilities are in the main residence.

Staffing

The service employs three staff in total and they all work directly with the children. This includes the registered provider. All staff working directly with the children hold a major 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. 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 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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person who was able to deputise if needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and the named person were on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in the service and all staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) The staff files in relation to three adults who were employed in the service were the subject of the inspection.
- (a) Of the six required references, three were from previous employers with required records of validation on file.
 - (b) Of the six required references, three were from another source with records of validation on file.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained and were on file for each of the three adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Records demonstrated that the three adults had achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 to level 8 as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of adults present within the service working directly with the children.

(3) The service met the minimum ratio requirement of 1 to 11. There were 3 adults present in the service with 18 children.

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 child records were reviewed as part of this inspection. The required information, as detailed under parts (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h) and (i) of this regulation, were maintained in writing in respect of each of the 10 children.

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 children had access to drinking water as required throughout the day. Food was provided by the parents and healthy eating was promoted within the service.
- Children's toilets were accessible from the care rooms, this allowed the children to use the toilet as they needed and seek assistance if required.
- The adults ensured that children were dressed appropriately when playing outdoors.

Supporting relationships:

- The staff in the service demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their conversations with the children. This was observed while the children were engaged in a tabletop activity and there were rich discussions about different children's families.
- The staff engaged with the children in their play and extended the children's learning through questions and posing additional challenges. For example, a staff member supported the children to add equipment to the obstacle course that they were building outside to make the balancing beams higher.

Physical and material environment:

- The service had two interconnected playrooms separated by an archway. In the section of the room with the entrance door there was a long table that could accommodate all the children to sit together during snack time and tabletop activities.
- There was also a large chalk board mounted to the wall where children could be creative and draw.
- There was a range of materials to support children’s fine motor development such as peg boards and puzzles. There was a range of materials to support children’s imaginary play such as action figures, dolls and cars.

Non-Compliance Information

The children were not provided with adequate rest facilities. There were no cushions or soft seating available within the care room where children could relax. It is acknowledged that a child sized couch was available within the service but had been removed from the care rooms.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service placed a child sized couch in the main classroom area to provide an area of rest and relaxation for the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and documentation submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19(1)(a) has been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary

pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a large range of varied play equipment for the children to engage with that was appropriate to their age and stage of development. Equipment was displayed on low level shelves and additional equipment was stored within the care rooms in large presses. These stored materials were rotated for use based on the changing interests of the children. There were resources available for children to engage in creative play such as paint, colouring pencils and chalk. There were materials to support pretend play such as the kitchen unit, dolls, cars and garages. There was a large outdoor area where the children could engage in physical play with balance beams, blocks, shovels and ride on toys.
- (4) The children had access to a large outdoor area daily and the staff noted that they liked to spend a lot of time outdoors dependant on the weather. The inspector observed that the children enjoyed the outdoor space and were engaged in different activities. The space was secured by a wall and gates and children did not have access to the garden at the rear of the building.

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 internal and external doors were secured as required and this prevented any children exiting unsupervised or unauthorised persons gaining access to the service. The entrance to the service was gated and this was closed once all children had been dropped off.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection.
- The heavy furniture had been securely anchored to the wall.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of children.

- The hot water was temperature controlled below 43°C and available throughout the service.

Infection control:

- The service had a fridge available within the care room to store children's lunches.
- Cleaning schedules were available and completed as required within the service.
- The service has foot pedal operated bins.

Fire safety:

- Firefighting equipment was accessible and was mounted to the walls.
- The fire exits were free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. The windows in the care rooms were not secure and as the windows were at a height this posed a possible fall risk to children.
2. Some of the bikes in the outdoor area were not in good repair. The protective rubber on the handlebars had worn away and this posed a possible injury risk to the children.

Infection control:

3. Children were not provided with soap when washing their hands in the outdoor hand basin when returning inside for snack from outdoor play. The lack of soap impeded effective handwashing and this could have posed a risk of infection to the children.
4. Individual cotton cloths were available for the children to dry their hands but it was observed that children were drying their hands with the same cloth and not using one cloth each and this poses a risk of cross infection.
5. The cups used for children's drinking water were not being cleaned effectively. It is acknowledged there was a system in place for cleaning the cups but this was not sufficient. This posed a risk of infection to the children.
6. In the outdoor area stagnant water had pooled in play equipment. Stagnant water poses a possible infection risk to children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The service provided evidence that they secured the windows in the classroom.
2. The service provided a statement that they had removed all of the bikes in the outdoor area that were not in good repair.

Infection control:

3. The service will ensure that soap is supplied when children are using the outdoor handwash basin.
4. The service will supply paper hand towels to allow children to dry their hands.
5. The service have outlined how they will ensure that cups are sufficiently cleaned between children's use.
6. The service will ensure that the outdoor area is checked daily and all potential risks removed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

Photographic evidence submitted.

Infection control:

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and documentation submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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

- (2)
- (a) There was a sufficiently stocked first aid box available in the service, which was safely stored out of reach of children.
 - (b) During the inspection the first aid supplies were available to the adults to use for the children if needed.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) There was no staff member with up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training for a period of time on duty while the service was in operation. It was acknowledged that a staff member had paediatric first aid training

and that the service had organised that all staff members would engage in FAR training. This posed a safety risk to both staff and children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service was aware of the issue and had scheduled for all staff to attend FAR training in the near future. This was communicated to the inspectors in the day of inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and documentation submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25(1) has been adequately addressed.

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 fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had records of the monthly fire drills that took place within the service. The last drill took place on the 03 February 2025.
- (b) The certification of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated this was carried out in August 2024. The certification of testing for the smoke alarms was dated the 07 August 2024.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An in-date certificate was in place to demonstrate that the service was insured to provide sessional care for the number of children the service is registered to accommodate.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School