

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE050
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Name of Service:	Forever Friends Preschool
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Address of Service:	St Joseph's National School, Quartermire, Milltown Malbay, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 H7K6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kate Looney
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Quality and Regulation Directorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ennis Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare V95TY4E
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy
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

Not applicable

Description of service

Forever Friends Preschool is a privately operated, sessional preschool service, operating within St. Joseph's National School in Miltown Malbay, County Clare. The service offers an Early Childhood Care and Education programme Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 12:30 for thirty-eight weeks of the year. The service facilitates the programme of care and learning in an indoor and outdoor classroom. Sanitary facilities are located next to the preschool room. The outdoor area is located adjacent to the service.

Staffing

Three adults are employed by the service, and two adults are available to provide relief cover. On the 16 October 2025 the registered provider and two adults worked directly with the children.

The registered provider is the owner and the manager of the service. The adults working directly with the children have obtained appropriate qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education. Records were available of the adult's engagement in continuing professional development.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (3)

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking in and out and record of attendance

Regulation 25 - First aid (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 26- Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 28- Insurance

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. 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, the 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 registered provider was the person in charge, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and the deputy were available during the inspection.

(2)

Five files were available in respect of the registered provider, the adults working in the service and the adults who provide relief cover in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

Seven validated references from past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.

(b)

Three validated references were available from sources other than past employers in respect of the adults working in the service.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the five adults currently working in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required in respect of the adults working in the service as no adult had lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.

(4)

The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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)

During the inspection, an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.

(3)

On the 16 October 2025, the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Two adults cared for the sixteen children attending the service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs of Children:

The children's learning, development and well-being was observed to be supported by the adults. The adults cared for the children in a kind and respectful manner. This was observed through the adults using soft tones of voice, positive language and offering praise and encouragement consistently. Positive behavioural strategies were used during all interactions with the children. The children were notified in advance of changes in activities and the transitions were completed with ease. Children were encouraged to be independent with their personal belongings, while having their lunches and drinks and while using the toilet. The children's individual cues for assistance were responded to promptly and in a sensitive manner. Mealtime took place in a covered section in the outdoor area and was observed to be a sociable and relaxed occasion. The adults and children sat together and conversed amicably.

Physical and Material Environment:

The indoor and outdoor environment provided an experience that was developmentally challenging, diverse, creative and enriching for the children. The children predominantly remained in the outdoor classroom for the sessional period. The children engaged in various forms of challenging play and learning that included: driving a pretend wooden car, engaging with sensory board games, painting exercises, creating a nature table, playing farm games, using slides, tyres, playing with the insect hotel, balancing on beams and crawling in a tunnel. The children were consulted and led the programme throughout the morning.

Storage boxes in the outdoor area accommodated a large quantity of toys, materials and equipment for the children. The children could readily access these boxes, and the adults informed the inspector that based on the children's

choices the designated areas and equipment in the indoor and outdoor area are rotated frequently. Wooden learning aids demonstrating numbers, shapes, letters and colours were displayed around the boundary fence.

The indoor area was well-planned, laid out with distinct interest areas offering lots of space for different forms of play and learning activities. Low level tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities. The areas of interest included a rest and library area. This area was stocked with a range of reading materials and provided a relaxing space for the children. A sand and water play table, a wooden puppet theatre, a home corner, a hairdresser area, a dress up rail with a large range of costumes provided a space for sensory and imaginative play. A large range of Halloween creations were available. Two large shelving units accommodated a range of play and learning materials. Individual learning journals were available demonstrating the children’s learning journey through pre-school.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

The service operated an open-door policy and the staff communicated informally with parents upon the children’s arrival and collection from the service. The parents/guardians had an opportunity to discuss their child’s needs, and the adults shared their observations of the children. Photographs of the play and learning activities that the children engaged in were shared with parents throughout the day on a phone application. A key person system was observed in place. The adults demonstrated an understanding of each child’s needs, preferences and capabilities. The adults demonstrated a strong ethos of teamwork during facilitation of the play-based programme of learning. All the adults have trained in sign language to integrate and support the communication of all children attending the service.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The entrance to the service was secured to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility.
- The outdoor play area was secured with fencing and a gate to protect the children within.

- Cleaning agents were stored in a secured area out of reach of the children.
- Risk assessments were completed and available detailing measures taken to reduce the risk within the service.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lined, lidded pedal operated bins.
- The children washed their hands at regular intervals after using the toilet and activities.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered during the inspection.
- Documentation was available should medication be required.
- The adults demonstrated an understanding of the administration of medications policy.

Fire Safety:

- The registered provider held a record of up-to-date fire safety training.
- The service completes monthly fire drills.
- The adults readily identified the fire assembly point in the school yard.
- The fire exits and routes were clear from obstruction throughout the service.

Outing:

- Outings are undertaken yearly by the service.
- The registered provider demonstrated an awareness of the outings policy. The service-maintained records of outing's checklists and risk assessments for completed outings.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1)

A record book detailed the children's arrival and departure to and from the service daily.

(3) (a)

The registered provider ensured that no person other than the persons outlined in (i) to (iv) entered the service without prior approval. All visitors recorded had written approval by the person in charge.

(b)

A written record was available recording all visitors at the entrance to the service.

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)

Two adults working directly with the children held a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training.

(2)(a)

Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored in accessible and conspicuous positions in the care room and adjacent to the outdoor classroom.

(b)

The first aid box was available in the service for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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.
- (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)

Records of completed monthly fire drills were available. The most recent fire drill took place on the 24 September 2025.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system maintenance service took place on the 28 April 2025.

(4)

Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed at the entry/exit points in the building.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for twenty-two children attending the service. The policy is valid until 27 March 2026.