

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015CE078

Name of Service: Little Bubbles Playschool

Address of Service: Saint Conaires National School, Tullyvarragh, Shannon, Co. Clare

Eircode: V14 FX20

Name of Registered Provider: Emma Bowen

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 04/04/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	12
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare
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
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Description of service

Little Bubbles Playschool was established in 2008, as a privately owned, sessional childcare facility, in Saint Connaire's National School, in Shannon town, County Clare. A programme of care and education is facilitated Monday to Friday in two sessions from 08:50 to 11:50 and 12:05 to 15:05 for children ranging in age from two to six years. The service operates in one open plan room, in a prefabricated structure behind Saint Connaire's National School building. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the prefabricated structure.

Staffing

On 04 April 2025 the registered provider and four adults work directly with the children in attendance.

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 focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(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 25 - First aid (1) (2)(a)(b)

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

Regulation 28- Insurance

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. 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)

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 and the adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

Eight written and validated references from past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.

(b)

Two written and validated references from a source other than past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the adults employed by 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 they had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months.

(4)

The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 6 and Level 8 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 the children attending the pre-school service were supervised at all times.

(3)

On the 04 April 2025 the minimum ratio of adults caring for the children was maintained at all times. Four adults cared for the eighteen children in attendance in the morning and four adults cared for the twelve children in attendance in the afternoon.

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)

The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities and interactions having regard to the age and developmental level of the children. One care room was in operation during the inspection.

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a caring and respectful manner and positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions. The adults praised the children, listened attentively, used soft tones of voice and responded promptly to their cues for assistance and to be hugged. The children were encouraged to be independent during play and learning activities, whilst caring for their belongings, at mealtime and whilst using the toilet. The adults supervised and treated the children in a sensitive manner during toileting. Children were supported individually and as part of a group. The adults demonstrated a good understanding of the children's personal interests, preferences and capabilities.

The children were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and learning activities. The children predominantly remained in the outdoor play area and transitioned freely from the indoor to the outdoor environments engaging in play-based activities. Throughout the day, the children were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and educational activities. A variety of stimulating opportunities and equipment for play and learning activities were available and accessible to the children. Children were observed engaging in painting, sand play, balancing games, climbing, pretend play, using the sea saw and activity frame. Mealtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable occasion whereby the children conversed amicably with their peers and the adults. Parents provided healthy and nutritious food and beverages for the children.

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 external entrance to the school was secured with a bell operated system to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children and unauthorised persons to the school and childcare facility. The childcare facility was secured with a gate and a thumb turn lock on the door to prevent children leaving unsupervised.
- The outdoor area to the rear of the prefabricated structure was secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within.
- The children were signed in and out on arrival and departure to the service and were supervised at all times during the inspection.
- Medication was stored in a secured cabinet out of reach of the children.
- Storage facilities were secured and inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- The indoor and outdoor environments were maintained in a clean condition.
- The sanitary facility was equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, after using the toilet and on return from outdoor play and before mealtime.
- The children’s personal belongings were stored individually on rails.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered during the inspection.
- The registered provider demonstrated an understanding of the administration of medication policy.
- Documentation was available for the adults to use should medication be administered in the service.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit routes and passageways were clear from obstruction.

- The fire assembly point and fire exit route was readily identifiable. A fire action notice was displayed at the fire exit points in the building.
- The service demonstrated evidence of completing monthly fire drills to prepare the service to respond in the event of fire.

Outing:

- An outing was not undertaken during the inspection.
- The registered provider stated that outings are undertaken by the service and demonstrated an awareness of the service's outings policy and procedure.

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 had a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and a record indicated that an adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available in the service at all times.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in an accessible and conspicuous area in the service.

(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 were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 20 March 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 took place respectively on the 20 March 2025 and 28 August 2024.

(4)

A fire action notice was displayed demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

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 pre-school children. The insurance policy for the sessional service is valid until the 28 March 2026.