

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN010
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Name of Service:	Bright Start
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Address of Service:	Main St, Mullagh, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	A82 D282
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nuala Gilsenan
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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	23	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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

Bright Start has been operating as a privately run childcare service since 2008. They provide sessional care to pre-school children aged from 2 to 6 years. The service is open from 9am to 12 midday Monday to Friday, 38 weeks per year, and caters for a maximum of 32 children. The service currently has 2 care rooms in operation namely: ECCE 1 (located over 3 rooms downstairs) ECCE 2 (located upstairs). There is nappy changing and sanitary accommodation and an office also available. The service has an outdoor area to the back of the service. Car parking is provided to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are 4 adults employed in the service who work directly with the children including the registered provider.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 20 Facilities for rest and play, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 27 Supervision and Regulation 28 Insurance.

However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16 Record in relation to pre-school service. 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) The service had a designated person in charge who is the registered provider, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(2) The files for 4 staff were reviewed.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references were on file for 4 adults.

A total of 3 written and validated references were from a previous employer.

A total of 5 written and validated references were from reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 4 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for 4 staff, demonstrated that no adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, therefore police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 4 staff employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 6 or above 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at maximum attendance.

Three adults cared for 12 children aged 3 years 1 month to 4 years 7 months in ECCE 1 room.

One adult cared for 11 children aged 3 years 10 months to 5 years in ECCE 2 room.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

Non-Compliance Information

Records reviewed at 10.23am and 11.35am did not adequately reflect the attendance of each child on the day of the inspection. One child present in the ECCE 2 room was not signed in on the service attendance records.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The register was updated by the end of the preschool day. This was an oversight as the child in attendance came in late. It is not a normal occurrence. After a staff meeting following the inspection, we were all reminded of the importance of updating the registers and regular checks.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of completed attendance records daily.

Copy of staff meeting notes.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 16 (h).

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
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

- Snack time was observed to be a relaxed time, where children were observed to sit and have conversations with their peers. Where children were observed to choose not to have their snack at this time, they were facilitated to play in areas of their choosing and could have their snack at a different time. The staff supported children where help was needed in opening some food items. The children had access to their drink bottles throughout the preschool session.
- The children were observed to use the toilet independently, and when they requested to use the toilet whilst playing outdoors, the staff were observed to supervise children during these times. Spare clothing was provided for each child should they require a change during their time in preschool.
- The children in both preschool rooms experienced a change of environment during their preschool session and spent time outdoors, where children from both preschool rooms had opportunities to play together. The children were observed to be dressed appropriately for the weather on the day of inspection.
- The staff were observed to provide one to one care for children that required additional supports during their time in the preschool session.

Supporting Relationships

- The atmosphere upon the inspectors arrival was welcoming. The children in both care rooms were observed to be engage in play and activities closely supported by the staff.
- The staff used gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings such as when children had minor disagreements over toys. The staff were observed to promote positive behaviour, with praise given for positive interactions such as turn taking.

- Communication with parents is through in person engagement at arrival and collection times. Opportunities to meet staff outside of these times is also available. A digital messaging service is also used at end of week, when the staff would share photos and comments of what the children had been spending their time in preschool doing that week.
- The staff team were observed to work well together, ensuring transitions were smooth.

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

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(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) 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. Designated interest areas were set up in each preschool room with an adequate number of resources available for the number of children registered to attend the service.

(b) In both preschool rooms there was rest areas to include soft sofas and cushions where children could sit, lay and relax on or take a break from an activity during their time in preschool.

(4) (a) A suitable, safe and secure outdoor area was provided for children's use. The large outdoor area was located to the rear of the premises. This area was secured, fenced and gated. It consisted of tarmac and grassed ground surfaces. A covered area with table top play equipment and a sand tray was provided. A selection of ride on and push along toys, tyres, wooden planks and plastic cylinders were used on the long tarmac area. A grassed

area with a low-level tree that children were observed to climb, and a gravel pit with trucks was available. A wooden house to the rear of the garden provided an area that was set up as a home corner for children to play within. Many plants, wall mounted mirrors along with seating was also available in the outdoor area.

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

The registered provider ensured all reasonable measures were put in place to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending such as:

General Safety:

- The premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. A visitor log was maintained, and the inspector was requested to sign in and out upon arrival and departure.
- The outdoor play area was observed to be secured with high level fencing, walls and secured gates.
- The toys used by the children on the day of inspection were observed in good condition.
- The kitchen area was secured and inaccessible to the children. Storage areas remained inaccessible to the children.
- The window in the upstairs preschool room was fitted with a window restrictor.
- Stairways and floor coverings were presented in good condition.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored out of the reach of children.
- Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated pedal bins were provided for handwashing purposes. The children were observed to wash their hands after using the toilet and before snack time.
- Sanitary areas are ventilated through means of openable windows.

- Parents/carers send in the children's snack on a daily basis. The children's snacks contained perishable food items, which were stored in the fridges in the preschool rooms until snack times.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The hot water supply provided at the children's wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation for the ECCE 2 room located upstairs was recorded at 46.5°C, which is in excess of the maximum safe water temperature of 43°C and posed a risk to the children. When identified, the inspector informed the registered provider of the scalding risk. The registered provider adjusted the controls on the hot water tank and the water reduced to 28.9°C following the adjustments. This non-compliance was identified at the service's last inspection where the preventative actions outlined were; *"Upon discussions with the staff, it was decided that the water temperature switch will not be raised during the 9-12pm session while the children are in the service. There will be a reminder notice placed on the door 'not to touch the temperature gauge' and the issue will be raised again at the next staff meeting."* The measures put into place have not adequately ensured that the risk identified would not occur again.
- A wooden playhouse in the outdoor area had two sections attached to the front of the playhouse, which had become flaked at the bottom section, and in turn had exposed nails present. The chipped wood and exposed nails pose a risk of injury to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The service has re-set the thermostat and are delegating the job to one staff member to ensure the water thermostat is checked before 9am every morning, and the deputy manager will double check that the delegated staff member has done the checks and will sign off on it .
- The sections attached on the front of the wooden playhouse have been removed and any nails exposed have been removed. The service will continue our daily outdoor risk assessment with extra vigilance on the playhouse to ensure it is usable. We do hope to do further repairs but if we feel it is not fit for purpose we will remove it altogether.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Notices on display to remind staff to check water temperature.

Copy of staff meeting notes.

Photograph of wooden play house with two side sections removed.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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) The registered provider ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Two staff held in-date FAR training certificates.

(2) (a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available on the premises and was stored in an accessible and conspicuous location and available at all times.

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 firefighting 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) A record of the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded in June 2025. The service was closed for summer months.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated September 2025, and the smoke alarms was dated February 2025.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection the inspector observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance, whilst in the indoor and outdoor play environments.

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 insurance cover in place for 32 pre-school children attending the service on a Sessional basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.