

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2015CN045 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Pebbles Childcare |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Shercock Road, Cabra, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan |
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| <b>Eircode:</b> | A82 X6A0 |
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| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Pauline Grimes |
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|                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Service type:</b> | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| <b>Date of Inspection:</b> | 23/09/2025 |
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| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 54 | PM | 17 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Tusla Early Years Inspectorate<br>Meath Child & Parent Support Hub,<br>Commons Road,<br>Navan,<br>Co. Meath |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>                | D.Murray & AM. Cunningham   |
| <b>Title:</b>                                   | Early Years Inspectors  |

### 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).

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| <b>Conditions if applicable</b> | Not Applicable |
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### Description of service

Pebbles Childcare is a privately operated Early Years' Service which provides full day, part-time and sessional care and education to children from 1 to 6 years. A school aged service is also provided. The service operates from 7:00am to 17:30 pm and eligible children can participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE). The service consists of four care rooms as follows:

The **Wobbler** room (upstairs) facilitates the care of children from 1 to 2 years.

The **Toddler** room accommodates the care of children from 2 years to 2.8 years.

**ECCE Room 1** provides care and education for children from 3.6 years to 5 years attending a sessional ECCE service from 9:30am to 12:30pm with some children availing of full day care service.

**ECCE Room 2** provides care and education for children from 2 .8 to 3.6 years attending a sessional ECCE service from 9:00am to 12:00pm with some children availing of full day care service. Additional facilities include a kitchen, office, sanitary accommodation and three outdoor play areas located to the rear and side of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs 1 administration staff and 14 childcare staff members. Present on the morning of inspection were the registered provider, administrative staff and 11 childcare staff caring for 54 children. An additional staff member commencing work at 12md and a childcare staff member commenced work at 12:30pm. One childcare staff member was on leave.

### 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.

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, administration staff member, childcare 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 and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) Sixteen staff files were reviewed.

(a)(b) Thirty-two validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for 16 staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting's were available for 2 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Fifteen staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) One member of staff did not have the required childcare qualification.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) The staff member has tried on various occasions to obtain police vetting with no success. In future staff members requiring police vetting will not commence employment until the vetting is obtained.

(4)The registered provider will not employ any staff member until they have completed a full childcare qualification.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Correspondence regarding obtaining police vetting.

Documents received do not state that this staff member has a childcare qualification.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider has not addressed the non-compliances as follows:

No police vetting has been submitted to the inspectorate for the staff member. It is the responsibility of the registered provider to provide a copy of the police vetting to the Inspectorate when received.

No childcare qualification has been submitted to the inspectorate to indicate that the staff member has an appropriate childcare qualification.

These non-compliances remain outstanding.

### 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) Present on the morning of inspection were the registered provider, administrative staff and 11 childcare staff caring for 54 children. An additional staff member commencing work at 12md and a childcare staff member commenced work at 12:30pm.

(2) On the morning of the inspection the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:

The **Wobbler** room had 8 children ranging in age from 1 to 2 years being cared for by 3 staff. One child went home at 10:30am, 3 children were attending the full day care service with 4 children attending the part time service.

The **Toddler** room had 11 children ranging in age from 2 to 2 years 8 months being cared for by 3 staff. Three children were attending the full day care service, 3 children were attending the part time service with 5 children attending the sessional service.

**ECCE Room 1** had 15 children ranging in age from 3 years 6 months to 5 years being cared for by 3 staff. Seven children were attending the full day care service with 8 children attending the sessional service.

**ECCE Room 2** had 20 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 3 years 6 months being cared for by 3 staff. Four children were attending the full day care service while Sixteen children were attending the sessional service.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises when the service was in operation.

### 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

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

#### Basic needs:

- The service provided breakfast and the remainder of the food was provided by parents. Mealtimes were social occasions with children and adults sitting together, staff provided children with help when needed. Younger children were supported to eat independently, and bibs were worn during meals to protect the children's clothes from becoming soiled or wet. Children were assisted to clean their faces and hands at appropriate times. Drinks were readily available within the care rooms.
- In the Wobbler and Toddler rooms any child who became upset or who were settling in were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. During activities children were offered choices and sought out staff members who readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments.
- Staff members were responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision provided and assistance given if required.
- Children were observed engaging in tabletop activities, art and crafts and free play with children afforded the opportunity to choose and change activities if they so wish. The curriculum was child led with the themes of the month being "Settling In", "My Family and Me" and "Autumn" with children's art work displayed.
- The service embraced outdoor play and learning. The outdoor spaces had areas of interest which supported children's play and curiosity with adequate space for children to play alone and in small and large groups. Children were observed enjoying imaginative, energetic and messy outdoor play with both their peers and staff members. Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with family photographs displayed in the care rooms which gave a sense of identity and belonging. Engagement with families and parents was facilitated by the daily sharing of information at drop off and collection which was supported by electronic means.
- The staff encouraged the children to engage positively with each other by adopting simple social rules such as turn taking, sharing in play activities and resolving minor disputes. Language used by the staff was observed to be encouraging, supportive and informative. Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to a new activity and for mealtimes.

### 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-

(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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

#### Compliance Information

(1)(b) Cosy areas consisting of mats, cushions and soft furnishings were available in each care room should a child needed to take a break from activities and rest. The Wobbler room upstairs was used for the younger children requiring sleep. A cot room was also available downstairs with 2 cots for the younger children requiring an early morning sleep.

(3)(a) The 3 outdoor spaces were enclosed by railings and walls with secure gates. A variety of surfaces were available to suit all play activities, artificial grass, soft low impact surface, cement pathways, tarmacadam and a large grass area. A partially sheltered area permitted children to play outside sheltered from the weather.

### 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 care rooms were well resourced with play materials and equipment which were laid out in interest areas which were spacious and uncluttered. The play materials and equipment incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts, a range of suitable toys and books which were easily accessible on open shelving at their height.
- The outdoor spaces were equipped with age-appropriate play materials and equipment. Equipment included activity unit with slide and climbing rope, ride on toys, rockers, wooden boat, large tyres with sand, wooden benches for outdoor dining and activities, water table, tuff trays, wooden shop, mud kitchen with play equipment, bug hotel, goal post, footballs and storage sheds for additional play equipment.

### 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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- When the inspectors arrived at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff. In addition, the outdoor play areas were enclosed by walls and fencing and securely gated. These security measures restricted unauthorized persons from gaining access to the service and prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.

##### Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy was implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- Liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided in all sanitary facilities.
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable items in the children's lunch boxes.

### Safe Sleep:

The following Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Staff were familiar with safe sleep guidance. Sleep logs were maintained recorded breathing, colour and position of the sleeping children at ten minute intervals. Standard cots were available for sleep. The temperature of the Wobbler rooms where children slept was recorded and maintained at the required temperature ranges.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. Two staff members garda vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

#### Infection Control:

2. Inadequate bins were provided in the service as evidenced by the following:
  - Soiled nappies were inappropriately stored in an open top bin in the nappy changing area off the Toddler Room, causing an unpleasant odour.
  - The bin in the nappy changing area off ECCE Room 2 and in the care room were not foot operated and therefore staff and children were repeatedly observed handling the bins to dispose of contaminated items. All bins should be foot operated and bins used for the disposal of soiled nappies must have a tight fitting lid.
3. The following was observed in the cot room downstairs:
  - There were no safety labels on the 2 mattresses to provide assurance that they reached the required safety specification.
  - The cover on the mattress in the cot on the right side on entering the room was soiled and torn.
4. In the Wobbler room a cable running along the wall for the fridge was trailing and accessible to children.
5. The straps on the 2 highchairs in the Wobbler room were visibly dirty and posed a contamination risk.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

1. Updated garda vetting have been obtained for the 2 staff members . The registered provider will ensure that all staff files are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure compliance.

##### Infection Control:

2. The open top bin has been removed. New foot operation bins have replaced the old bins. They have tight fitting lids.

3. The 2 mattresses that were faulty have been replaced. The mattress cover has also been replaced.

4. The cable in the wobbler room has been tacked to the wall.

5. The straps have been removed and washed.

The registered provider will conduct regular audits and risk assessments to ensure all equipment is safe and suitable for use in a childcare setting.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Updated garda vetting for 2 staff members.

Photographic evidence of :

Pedal operated bins.

Proof of purchase of 2 mattresses and mattress cover.

Cable no longer accessible to children.

Straps cleaned on high chairs.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

### 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 service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

### 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) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025.
- (b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment which were last serviced on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 74 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025 to the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(d) In ECCE Room 2 paint was peeling off the cupboard door under the sink making it difficult to clean effectively.

(e)

1. The nappy changing facilities in a hallway adjacent to ECCE Room 2 were unsatisfactory.  
A hallway is not a suitable area for nappy changing as there was no hand washing facilities available, children's coats and bags were stored in the vicinity and privacy was not afforded to the children being changed due to older children passing by to use nearby toilet facilities.
2. On discussion with staff members, up to 26 children can be present on Wednesdays who require nappy changing, a total of 3 nappy changing stations are required for this group of children as the ratio is 1 nappy changing unit and 1 wash hand basin for every 11 children. There is 1 nappy changing area located adjacent to the Toddler Room which meets acceptable standards.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) In ECCE Room 2 the paint has been replaced on the cupboard door under the sink. Management will conduct regular risk assessments to ensure all surfaces are smooth for effective cleaning.

(e) This area is no longer a nappy changing area. Parents have been advised that children attending ECCE Room 2 must be potty trained. If children require nappy changing the Toddler room facilities will be used.

2. Three nappy changing stations are now available. Two nappy changing areas off the Toddler room and one in the staff toilet.

The registered provider must ensure that there is an adequate number of nappy changing facilities to facilitate the number of children wearing nappies.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

(d) Photographic evidence of paint replaced on cupboard door under the sink.

(e) Additional nappy changing unit in changing area off Toddler room.

### **Summary Comment**

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.