

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL023		
Name of Service:	Clares Little Stars Preschool Ltd		
Address of Service:	Glenfinn Road, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal		
Eircode:	F93 TY01		
Name of Registered Provider:	Clare Cassidy		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	29/05/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	50	PM NA
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan		
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

Clares Little Stars Preschool Ltd is a privately run sessional preschool service in Ballybofey, Co. Donegal. The service operates three sessional rooms concurrently for three hours each day with staggered start times of 08.45a.m. to 09.15a.m. each day. An additional afternoon session is operated from 12.30p.m.-15.30p.m. each weekday. The service caters for children aged 2-6 years and operates during the academic school year. The service operates from the ground floor of a purpose adapted commercial premises. The service consists of three interconnecting preschool rooms each one with adjoining children sanitary accommodation. Adult sanitary accommodation, an office and storage facilities are also on site. Children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor area to the side and rear of the premises with direct access from each preschool room. A school age service is also on the premises.

Staffing

There were nine adults employed to work in the service with the children on a daily basis, including the registered provider. All nine adults were on the premises on the day of inspection. Each of the nine adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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 focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28. 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, 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,

(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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection. Staff rosters and sign in records documented that the person in charge was on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

(2) The staff files of nine adults were reviewed on this inspection.

(a) Out of the 18 required references, 9 references were available from a past employer and were validated.

(b) Nine references were available from a reputable source and were validated.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures received from The National Vetting Bureau of an Garda Síochana had been obtained in respect of each of the nine adults.

4) Documentary evidence showed that the nine adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) Police Vetting for one adult who had lived outside of a state for longer than six months over the age of 18 was not available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted a response on the 03/07/2025 outlining the attempts to obtain police vetting for one adult.

The registered provider stated that all vetting will be carried out prior to recruitment in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The police vetting remains outstanding and will be checked on the next inspection.

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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children were maintained throughout the inspection.

- In Room 1, 3 adults cared for 19 children between the ages of 3-5 years.
- In Room 2, 2 adults cared for 17 children between the ages of 3-5 years.

- In Room 3, 3 adults cared for 14 children between the ages of 3-4 years.

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

(1) (a)

Basic Need

- Individual inclusion plans were implemented in line with the child's own needs. The plans detailed the developmental stage of the child and the interventions needed by the staff to always ensure the child's learning in the service.
- Children's lunches and snacks were brought in from home. On the morning of the inspection, children were observed enjoying sandwiches, wraps, crackers and a selection of fruits including strawberries, oranges, apple and blueberries. Lunch time was relaxed with staff members sitting with the children and engaging in social conversation.
- Children's individual drink bottles were available to them throughout the session.
- Children were supported to use the toilet and handwashing facilities independently with staff providing support when required.
- Each of the playrooms contained a child sized sofas should a child require a rest throughout the morning.

Supporting relationships

- A key worker system was in place in the service with named staff assigned the responsibility for creating close relationships with children as evidenced through documentation.
- The staff demonstrated warmth in their interactions with the children, praising positive behaviours such as sharing and turn taking.

- Staff and parents work in partnership in the service. The service used a software technology application to share information and observations with parents and the platform allowed parents to communicate back to the service.
- The staff members were observed to work well as a team, frequently collaborating with each other in relation to activities and children’s needs.
- Pictures of the children’s families were displayed on the walls, creating a link between the child’s home and preschool.

Physical and Material Environment

- Each of the three playrooms were bright and welcoming with a variety of well-defined interest areas such as home corners, construction areas, dramatic play resources such as “The airport”, sensory trays with farmyard materials, rest areas, fine motor activities such as puzzles and writing materials, small world play items such as dollhouses and castles, “shops” and market areas.
- Children’s artwork was displayed on the walls.
- Children in each room had access to the outdoor area on the morning of the inspection. Children had access to a large number of ride on vehicles and resources for outdoor play such as kitchen items, building blocks and sand trays. A sheltered awning provided shade in warmer weather.
- A range of books were available in each room which supported children’s language and development.
- Long, medium and short-term activity plans and themes were displayed on the walls, relative to each room.

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 main entrance gate in the preschool was secured to prevent unauthorised entry of an adult or the unsupervised exit of a child.
- Windows at children’s height were fitted with visibility strips to prevent accidents or incidents.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children.
- Toys, furniture and equipment were in a good state of repair and well maintained.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, soap and disposable paper towels were available to children and adults for effective handwashing.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available for the disposal of waste.
- The preschool rooms and sanitary facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Perishable lunch items brought in from home were stored in refrigerators.

Administration of Medication:

- There was no medication administered on the day of inspection however the registered provider and adults explained to the inspector the correct procedure to be followed should a child attending the preschool require medication.

Outing:

- The registered provider advised the inspector that the service does not go on any outings.

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 trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Five adults had current training in first aid for children.

(2) (a) First aid boxes with content items were within date, safely stored and easily accessible in a conspicuous position.

(b) The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes were fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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 detailing fire drills had taken place in the service. Fire drills were carried out monthly which was evidenced through fire drill records with the most recent fire drill taking place on 30 April 2025.
 - (b) There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms had been serviced on 28 August 2024.
 - (4) The procedures to be followed during a fire evacuation were displayed in a conspicuous position in the service, with each noting the nearest fire assembly point.

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 adequate insurance was in place for 66 children up to 27 March 2026.