

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015DL043
--------------------------	-------------

<b>Name of Service:</b>	Fairytales Day Care
-------------------------	---------------------

<b>Address of Service:</b>	Ray Community Centre, Ray, Rathmullan, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
----------------------------	---

<b>Eircode:</b>	F92 CD70
-----------------	----------

<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Patrice McBride
-------------------------------------	-----------------

<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	29/11/2025
----------------------------	------------

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	9	PM	0
-----------------------------------	----	---	----	---

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S Mc Kenna
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
---------------------------------	-----------------

### Description of service

Fairytales Day Care operates from a community building in a coastal village in north west Donegal. The service caters for children aged two to six years and is registered to operate between the hours 8am to 2pm, and currently only provides sessional care between 9am to 12noon on Mondays and Fridays.

The service offers the Early Childhood and Education Scheme (ECCE) between the hours of 9am – 12noon.

The care room for the preschool is on the first floor, with sanitary accommodation available on the first and ground floor. An outdoor play area is available at the side of the building. An additional room in the building used by the preschool service is the large amenity hall on the ground floor.

### Staffing

There are two main staff members employed to work in the service, and the registered provider provides relief cover when required. A student on a college work placement was present on the day of inspection.

### 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 23 Safeguarding

Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 27 Supervision and 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. 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 service manager, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

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

(2) The files for 3 staff and 1 student were reviewed.

(a) (b)

A total of 5 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

A total of 1 written reference from a previous employer were on file.

A total of 2 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 3 staff and 1 student. 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 on file for 3 staff and 1 student demonstrated that no adult 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 2 main staff employed to work with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for one student was not required.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

A written reference on file for one student had not been validated.

(4)

Following review of records available for the registered provider, it could not be determined if they held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

Registered provider spoke via telephone and validated the reference. Once reference is submitted, validation will occur immediately.

Registered provider obtained a letter of recognition from DCDE in relation to her qualification. Letter of recognition will be sought if required

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Copy of validated reference. Letter of Qualification Recognition, which outlines level 5 equivalency.

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9 (2) (a) (b) and (4).

### 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

(2) The adult-to-child ratio observed for the number of children in attendance in line with the sessional care provided on the day of inspection between 10:23am to 12noon, was in line with the adult to child requirements. Two adults cared for 9 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years old, of whom all attended on a sessional basis.

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider did not ensure that there was at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service. During the hours of 9am to 10:23am one staff member was working with the children. It is acknowledged that a second staff member arrived at 10:23am.
- (8) The registered provider did not ensure that two adults were on the premises at all times in line with part time regulatory requirements.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Registered provider took immediate action on the morning to safeguard a member of staff, due to an outbreak of an infectious condition within the setting. The room leader asked the staff member not to attend in case of risk. The outbreak was only informed at drop off in the morning, and the registered provider, working in the sister service, found cover immediately and travelled over to the setting. This left a gap in time, but we acted with the duty of care and responsibility for the staff member. Upon reflection, I could have asked the staff member to attend and wait in the hallway until the cover arrived, but it was at that point where I made the decision to call her and ask to not to attend. I felt I was safeguarding them and not putting them at any risk whatsoever.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

None received.

**Summary Comment**

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 11 (1) and (8).

**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**

The children were observed to have their morning snack in a relaxed manner, and staff used this time to encourage children to have conversations among their peers. The student on work experience supported staff in facilitating snack time and helped children with opening food items if needed. The children's snacks taken in from home contained a selection of yogurts, cheeses, fruit, breadsticks, vegetables, meats, rice cakes and sandwiches. The children's drinks were stored in a box readily available to them throughout their preschool session.

Older children are encouraged to use the toilet independently, and younger children have their nappies changed in line with their individual care needs.

A cosy rest area is available in their room with soft child-sized sofas with cushions and a floor mat.

The children experienced a change of environment by using the amenity hall upon arrival for physical play time.

**Supporting Relationships**

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival was warm, welcoming, and the children were observed to be taking part in circle time together with the student. The staff were observed to demonstrate sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families, through respecting parental wishes while also recognising

children's individual preferences and choice. Staff were observed to treat each child with respect, and discussions with the children demonstrated familiarity with the child's family.

The staff and the student were observed to communicate with the children using soft, gentle, positive tones. They were observed to give each child adequate time, getting down to their level and speaking to them individually, providing one-to-one support or help where needed.

Children's choices were respected through play, for example, where children chose what picture they wanted to colour, and they were encouraged to help the person in charge with copying the pictures.

Each child was observed to receive a high level of support from the staff in their play and daily routine. On many occasions, the person in charge was observed informing the children of what was coming next, if any child had a problem, how best to solve it, and they always provided reassurances where any child may have had questions. Strong relationships were observed among the student, staff and children. The children appeared very familiar with those who cared for them and confidently called out for adult support when needed.

Transitions were smooth in the preschool session and the person in charge was observed to support and guide both the staff and the student on the children's routines.

Communication with parents is in person at arrival and collection and through use of a digital messaging app, and an online educational application. The service is located within a community building and the person in charge advised the inspector that the preschool takes part in looking after and visiting the community gardens which is located to the rear of the community building.

### **Physical And Material Environment**

The indoor care room was comfortable, pleasant and laid out to suit the needs of the children in attendance.

The room was spacious and uncluttered, and provided many designated interest areas for children use to, including but not limited to: a dinosaur small world area, a treasure tray, a home corner with a shop, table top areas, dress up materials, a cosy corner with books, a creative table, construction area, building and connecting toys and small world toys.

The indoor environment provides a range of enriching experiences for children, with materials freely available and accessible to children on low-level shelves and boxes at children's level, which nurtures children's independence to retrieve and self-care to return their play items.

The display of children's artwork and family photos was on the preschool room walls.

The outdoor area is spacious and safe. The person in charge advised the inspector that when the children play in this area, materials are taken outdoors from inside. These were observed stored in the hallway on the ground level on the day of inspection. Materials included building toys, physical play toys and small world materials.

There was heavy rain on the day of the inspection, however the children still availed of large physical play time through use of the indoor amenity hall.

### Programme of Activities

Children were facilitated to make their own choice on the day of inspection, such as after circle time, the children chose where they would like to go to play. Play areas where children were working the day before for example, the farm area, were kept for the children to choose to return to the area the following day to continue their work, or they could choose another area to play within.

Children's emerging interests were recorded and on display. Recent observations and comments documented from the children's emerging interests were converted into areas set up in their preschool room. For example a record available demonstrated children talking about what to have in a shop, and the area was created in the preschool room. Children's recent interests in dinosaurs were also enriched through the creation of a dinosaur small world area. The curriculum planning records available demonstrated that although the curriculum was planned to incorporate seasonal themes, it also allows flexibility for the children's emerging interests.

Participation in play was gently guided by the person in charge, although it was primarily child-led. The children demonstrated familiarity with the daily routine, such as a song that is sung before they had their food. The children, while engaging in play within the designated interest areas played imaginatively when playing in the play tent closely and were supported closely by the student at this time. The children also engaged in a role play game where they were "getting married", and they dressed up using blankets as dresses and veils, while the adults sustained their imaginative play through having discussions about the wedding.

## 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 premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. A doorbell fitted to a secured entrance door to the side of the building on the ground level notified preschool staff of a visitor's presence.
- The outdoor area located to the side of the community building was surrounded by secure fencing, and a gate had a ground surface of concrete paths and gravel. No hazards were identified.
- The toys and equipment used by the children were observed in a clean and hygienic condition.

- Risk assessments were completed up to date, with records available for review. No hazards were observed in the preschool room or sanitary areas.
- Storage areas were inaccessible to the children.
- Windows on the first floor were fitted with safety restrictor devices.
- Handrails on stairways were suitable for the children's use.
- Floor coverings were maintained in good repair.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- The emergency fire exits remained free from obstruction throughout the inspection.
- The lunch items taken in from home contained whole grapes. Whole grapes are a choking risk for children aged under 6 years. The staff removed these from the children's lunch boxes and cut them before allowing children to have them for their lunch.

### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running water, liquid soap, paper towels and bins were provided for handwashing purposes. Hand washing was observed in practice before children had their lunches.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated through means of openable windows or mechanical ventilation.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned before and after meals
- The children's lunches taken in from home were stored in the fridge in the kitchen until lunch times.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review and completed up to date. The preschool room and the community building areas used by the preschool children were presented in clean condition.
- External waste bins were stored securely and were inaccessible to children.

## 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. The person in charge and the registered provider working with the children on the day of inspection held in date FAR training certificates.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) & (b)

The materials provided within the first aid box, although the quantity was suitable for the number of children present on the day of inspection, some items were out of date to include bandages and plasters.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

First Aid materials were replaced with newly bought materials and placed into the first aid box. All first aid materials will be checked on monthly basis to ensure that they are all in date and in good working order. These will be checked and signed off by the Room Leader.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photo evidence of new materials.

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 25 (2) (a) (b).

## 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 record of the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 24 November 2025.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 10 October 2025, and the smoke alarms were dated 24 November 2025.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the building, 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

The children were observed to be adequately supervised by the adults during the inspection process.

## 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 up to 24 pre-school children attending the service on a part time basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.