

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL074
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Little Stars Pre-school (Moville)
-------------------------	-----------------------------------

Address of Service:	8 Bath Terrace, Moville, Co. Donegal
----------------------------	--------------------------------------

Eircode:	F93 HY0H
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Katie Fitzpatrick
-------------------------------------	-------------------

Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

Date of Inspection:	26/03/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	14
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Little Stars Pre-school is a privately operated early years 'service. The service is located on the main street of the seaside town of Moville, north Donegal. It is a part-time day care service catering for children aged 2-6 years of age. The service is registered to operate from 9:00hrs to 14:00hrs weekdays. There is also a school age service provided. The service operates from a commercial unit modified to accommodate the early years' service. There are two care rooms in the service. The service also has the use of a garden area that has been developed into a dedicated outdoor play space, with herb garden and vegetables.

Staffing

There are 11 adults working in the service, 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/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 (h).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on 27 March 2026 in relation to no Garda Vetting available for one staff member. Please see body of the report for more detail.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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 has a designated person in charge and a named person who can deputise as required.

(b)

On the day of inspection, the person in charge was on site for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

On the day of the inspection, the person in charge confirmed that there were 11 staff members who worked in the service. Recruitment files in respect of the 11 staff members were reviewed, and the following information was available:

- (a)
Eleven references from past employers, in particular the most recent past employer was on file for the seven staff members.
- (b)
Ten references from other sources, in the absence of a past employers, was on file for seven staff members.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 10 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 10 adults.
- (d)
International police vetting was on file for three staff members who had resided outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (4)
Documentary evidence on file to demonstrate that eight staff members had obtained a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(a)
One reference was not on file from either previous employers or (b) from reputable sources for one adult working directly with the children.
- (c)
An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on 27 March 2026 in relation to no Garda Vetting available for one adult working directly with the children. An adequate response was received from the registered provider on 27 March 2026.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)(a) References have now been acquired, printed and are on file in the office.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(c) The service has rectified the situation with immediate effect. In the future all contractors will be vetted again by the preschool.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(a) Service is now aware that vetting is required for adults working directly with children, so this won't happen again.

(c) Garda Vetting was sent to the early years inspectorate for the external contractor and the sport program resumed on 7th April 2026.

Summary Comment

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

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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2)
- The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed in the service:
- In the morning the adult child ratios were as follows:
- Junior Room: 2 Adults cared for 10 children from ages 2 years and 8 months to 4 years of age.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Senior Room: 2 Adults cared for 17 children from ages 4 years to 5 years of age.

In the afternoon, the adult child ratios were as follows:

- Junior Room: 2 Adults cared for 5 children from ages 2 years and 8 months to 4 years of age.
- Senior Room: 2 Adults cared for 9 children from ages 4 years to 5 years of age.

(8) (a)

A review of the staff ratio demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that two adults were always present on the premises.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

Compliance Information

A review of ten records was reviewed in relation to immunisations, if any, received by the child. All records were completed and compliant.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) (b) The following measures were observed to ensure that each child's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

Basic Needs:

On arrival to the service the two rooms were in the outdoors area. The junior room was in the nearby polytunnel outdoor area. The senior room was using a nearby basketball court. The children came in for free play indoors in their respective rooms before lunchtime. The staff were observed to escort children in small groups to the toilets in the service which was approximately five minutes' walk from the basketball court and the play park. It was accessed via a footpath through a park with no access to traffic. Within the service there was 2 toilets in each room and 2 sinks to accompany them, there was also hand-washing facilities within the okay room. Children were seen to wash their hands after messy play and before lunch.

Before sitting to eat lunch, staff assisted the children with hand hygiene. All children had their drink bottles on the table, and staff encouraged them to take their time and enjoy their meal. Children were supported to feed themselves, with assistance provided where required. Lunchtime was observed to be a calm and enjoyable experience, with children appearing relaxed and engaged with their food and with each other. Water bottles were available in both rooms and taken with them to the outdoor area ensuring that children always had access to drinking water.

Supporting Relationships:

There was strong evidence of respect and care throughout the service. Staff members were observed to be respectful, gentle and kind in their interactions with the children. During mealtime, staff sat at the tables and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed and positive atmosphere. Younger children were held and comforted, contributing to a warm and welcoming environment. The service supported children's relationships by keeping parents and guardians fully informed of daily activities using communication books, which provided updates on day-to-day activities. Photographs of the children's families displayed on the walls of the care rooms further supported children's sense of security and connection to home.

Physical and material Environment:

The indoor areas both upstairs and downstairs were arranged to facilitate a wide range of sensory and creative experiences, including arts and crafts activities and tables set up with nature items such as leaves, grass, twigs

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

and clay for sensory play. Fine-motor development was supported using jigsaws, shape sorters, crayons and drawing materials, while gross-motor development was encouraged through the nearby basketball court, play park and walks through the nearby park.

Both playrooms contained a variety of play-based materials that promoted stimulation, exploration and imagination. These resources were stored on open, accessible shelving, supporting children's independence, choice and spontaneous play. In the Junior room a tent was in place for imaginative play as children pretended to be camping on the day of inspection. Defined areas included a role-play kitchen with child-sized wooden appliances and utensils, dress-up areas with a variety of costumes, a reading area with a selection of books to support language development, and a construction area with small cars and trucks. There was a strong emphasis on art and design in the junior room with a large amount of the room dedicated to craft and artwork made by The children were displayed throughout the service. Children were encouraged to use paints and express their creativity.

The outdoor area consisted of a large polytunnel containing a seated area and library, a soft seated area, sand and water tables for sensory play and a section for plants and growing items. Children were observed playing with the sand and water and exploring the space. Outside to the right-hand side of the polytunnel was another outdoor space which was covered to cater for all weather. Within this area was tables and chairs, a variety of different tables containing different items from nature such as grass, leaves and twigs and mud for messy sensory play. This area was enclosed with a wooden fence for privacy but still gave views of the very nearby beach and ocean. On the basketball court a contract staff was given the children lessons in a variety of ball games. Two staff was present throughout the session with the contractor. Children expelled energy focusing on hand eye coordination, balance and gross motor skills. When this session ended the senior room children moved to a nearby playpark for play time. This was a new playpark with equipment including wings, slides and balance play equipment.

Programme of Activities:

Each child had an individual activity book which documented outings and activities as well as samples of the children's art and craft work and records of the themes explored, including the current theme of spring and nature. The service placed a strong emphasis on playing in nature and spend a lot of time outdoors. Time was spent in the nearby amenities and the outdoor space for the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 entrance door to the premises was found to be locked and secured upon arrival to the service, preventing unauthorised exit or entry. The back entrance door was secured when children were present on the premises. Internal door handles were up high to prevent children from opening them.
- The gate to the outdoor area was secured with a latch lock, positioned out of the reach of children.
- The staircase was adequately lit with a handrail.
- Lower-level windows were locked, and keys were kept secure in the office.
- The kitchen area was kept locked and was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.
- Sharp items such as scissors were observed to be stored up high.
- Cleaning products were stored out of reach of children. Storage areas were inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to routinely wash their hands at appropriate intervals, after art activity, after being outside, after toileting and before snack.
- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available to the children.
- The premises was observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. A cleaning schedule was observed to be in use and up to date.
- When outdoors, children's lunch boxes were observed to be stored in a cooler box with ice packs.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection to ensure safe evacuation in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Outing:

- Regular communication was observed between all adults via two-way radio receivers.
- Walkie talkie system was used to advise and update on groups comings and goings between the main building, garden area and playground.
- Children were observed to use a rope train to travel between each area, following a specific route that was routinely used.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) Eight staff members had up to date first aid responder training.

(2)

(a) (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available for the children.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) A record of the fire drills that take place monthly was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 17 February 2026.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated September 2025, and the smoke alarms was dated 04 September 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service in appropriate positions near exits, 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

Staff in the service supervised children both by sight and sound. Staff were continually moving around to different areas of the service and outdoor areas to position themselves to monitor the preschool children. Staff stayed within hearing range of children, while children used the toilet independently and could offer help if required.

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