

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL129
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Name of Service:	Small world Childcare LTD
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Address of Service:	Drumlonagher, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F94 FF82
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Gately
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	53	PM	52
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen and N. McEndoo
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Small world Childcare LTD is a privately owned and operated full day care service located on the outskirts of Donegal Town, County Donegal. The service currently provides full day care, part time and sessional preschool to children aged 0 to 6 years and operates from 7.45am to 6.00pm each weekday. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The premises is located within an industrial unit and comprises of one semi-detached two storey building, purposely adapted for the provision of an early years' service. The service consists of five preschool rooms, three on the ground floor and two on the first floor. The ground floor also houses a designated sleep room and sanitary accommodation for both staff and children. There is an office and sanitary accommodation for children on the first floor as well as two preschool rooms. There are three outdoor play areas available on site for use by different groups of children, these are located to the front and side of the building.

Staffing

There were 23 adults employed to work in the service which included the registered provider and person in charge.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,16,19,23, and 32 These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 11, 16 (h) (I) (K). As a result, the scope of the inspection included all care rooms.

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, 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,

(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

(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) (b).

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise on the day of inspection.

(2) (a) (b).

The records of 28 adults employed in the service had been reviewed on the service last inspection on the 09th of April 2024 and found to be compliant. Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection and is the focus of this review.

The following vetting information was available for two adults:

(a)(b) Three written and verified references from past employers were available for the two adults.

One reference from a reputable source was available for one adult.

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

(4)

The two adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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. There were 13 adults working directly with 53 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service.
2. The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
 - Senior Preschool: 3 adults cared for 19 children aged 3-4 years of age.
 - Toddler Room: 3 adults cared for 8 children aged 2 years 3 months- 2years 7 months.
 - Baby Room: 2 adults cared for 5 children aged 1 year of age.
 - Junior Preschool Room: 4 adults cared for 22 children aged 2 years 10 months to 3 years and 8 months.
 - Wobbler Room: 2 adults cared for 7 children aged from 15 months to 2 years.

In the afternoon the adult: child ratios were found to be as follows:

- Senior Preschool: 4 adults cared for 16 children aged 3-4 years of age.
- Toddler Room: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged 2 years 3 months- 2years 7 months.
- Baby Room: 2 adults cared for 5 children aged 1 years of age.

- Junior Preschool Room: 4 adults cared for 14 children aged 2 years 10 months to 3 years and 8 months.
- Wobbler Room: 2 adults cared for 5 children aged from 15 months to 2 years of age.

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;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

h) A daily record of attendance for children attending the service was available.

(i) A staff roster was available, and it was reflective of the staff present.

(k) A sample of 33 accident and incidents records were reviewed and observed to be completed in full with all necessary information.

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

- The indoor learning environments were spacious and well-organised, allowing children to move comfortably between activity zones and engage in self-directed play. In the baby room, infants were supported in their physical development through opportunities to lie, roll, creep, and crawl, with staff providing a calm and uninterrupted space for these movements. The baby room was carefully arranged to support the developmental needs of infants through a variety of age-appropriate resources including a

miniature kitchen area, soft toys, sensory items, plastic balls, peg boards, shape sorters, building blocks, and doll care accessories.

- A wall-mounted mirror supported visual development, while low-level equipment provided safe opportunities for gross motor practice such as pulling up and cruising. The inclusion of a ball pit added a playful sensory element to the environment. An adult-sized armchair was available to facilitate feeding and comforting, ensuring that nurturing interactions could take place in a relaxed and supportive setting.
- Across the five care rooms, each area was purposefully arranged to reflect the developmental stages of the children attending. A wide selection of play and learning materials was available, including puzzles, creative art supplies, imaginative role-play areas, construction resources, building blocks, dress-up costumes, and sensory experiences. These resources were stored on low-level open shelving, promoting independence and choice.
- The toddler room was bright and spacious, enhanced by colourful bunting suspended from the ceiling, creating a welcoming and stimulating atmosphere. The space was thoughtfully arranged into clearly defined interest areas, supporting children's engagement and exploration. These included:
 - A sensory table and sand play area equipped with shelves and buckets to encourage tactile and imaginative play. A small slide and climbing frame set on soft matting, promoting physical development and safe active play. Low-level open shelving, allowing children to independently select materials and direct their own play.
 - A rest area with soft flooring, child-sized couches and chairs, offering a comfortable space for relaxation.
 - A large playhouse and kitchen area, complete with child-sized washing machines, sink, oven, toaster, and a wide variety of toy foods, supporting role play and life-skill development.
 - An imaginative play zone featuring a diverse selection of costumes to inspire creativity and storytelling.
 - A construction area with a large road map and an assortment of vehicles including cars, trucks, lorries, and tractors, encouraging problem-solving and fine motor skills.
- The wobbler room was thoughtfully designed to support the developmental needs of younger children. These environments featured a range of age-appropriate equipment and materials that encouraged early movement, sensory engagement, and exploration. Key features included wall-mounted mirrors to support visual stimulation, tactile fiddle toys, and ball pits for safe and engaging sensory play.
- Outdoor play was a prominent feature of the day, with children spending extended periods outside. Staff took proactive measures to ensure children's safety and comfort by applying wet gear, hats, coats, and wellies. The outdoor area was well-organised and thoughtfully sectioned into three distinct zones, each

supporting different age groups and types of play: The baby area with a covered all-weather roof and artificial grass for safe exploration.

- A nature-based zone with a wooden deck, fenced soil and mulch area, gardening tools, and containers for sensory and environmental learning. A physical play area for older children with climbing frames and slides to promote gross motor development.
- The service provided the main meal, while daily snacks were brought in from home. A weekly menu was clearly displayed, outlining a variety of balanced and nutritious meals. On the day of inspection, children were served a hot lunch of minced beef, carrots, pasta, and tomato sauce. Milk accompanied the meal, and drinking water was readily available throughout the day.
- Staff actively promoted independence during mealtimes, encouraging children to feed themselves where possible. In the baby room, finger foods were offered to support self-feeding, with staff providing gentle assistance when needed. Mealtimes were treated as social occasions, with five-point safety harness high chairs and level feeding chairs used to ensure that even the youngest children could sit comfortably alongside their peers.
- Children in the baby room were placed to sleep in the designated sleep room for a scheduled period of rest in the afternoon. Flexibility was also observed, with children given the opportunity to sleep outside of scheduled times when needed.
- Staff members were observed to be kind, caring, and patient in their interactions with children. Children appeared relaxed and comfortable with the daily routine and their surroundings. Positive peer relationships were evident, and children were seen engaging socially with confidence. Staff demonstrated familiarity with individual children, identifying their preferences and acknowledging developmental progress.
- A digital application was used to record and communicate daily updates with parents, including information on eating, sleeping, and toileting patterns. Staff also used the app to share photos of children participating in activities, supporting parental engagement and continuity of care.
- Transitions between activities and routines were managed smoothly, with staff providing verbal cues and support to help children adjust. Children's voices were respected, with opportunities for choice and autonomy evident throughout the day. Staff were observed responding to children's interests and adapting activities accordingly.

Non-Compliance Information

1. During the inspection, it was noted that the bathroom facilities located between the wobbler and toddler rooms did not adequately support the privacy and dignity of the children using them. The toilet stalls in this area were not fitted with doors, resulting in children being visible to others while using the facilities. In addition, this layout allowed children entering the hallway or using adjacent toilets to observe those in the bathroom, which compromises the children's right to privacy during personal care routines.
2. On the day of inspection, children's sleep needs were not adequately met as observed when children who were sleeping on floor mats came into direct contact with the floor due to shifting during sleep. This arrangement poses a risk to children's comfort, positioning and overall welfare.
3. During the inspection, it was noted that a child with a known dietary-related health concern did not have an individual care plan in place. On discussion with both staff and the registered provider it was unclear whether the condition constituted an allergy or an intolerance. The lack of clarity presents a risk in the absence of a documented plan; staff may not be able to respond appropriately in an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) Toddler friendly stall doors have been added to the bathroom facilities.
- (1) It was discussed with the team and new signage with instructions was introduced as a reminder to ensure each child remain on their sleep mat fully during their nap. Reminders during staff meetings.
- (2) A new care plan was introduced, which will be completed by the parent to ensure we have a clear direction for staff to follow and also a doctor's note to confirm it Ensure all children with dietary concerns as given the form to fill upon enrolment.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) Photographic evidence provided.
- (2) Photographic evidence provided.
- (3) Photographic evidence provided.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 has been adequately addressed.

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 into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. A buzz entry system was provided allowing staff to control access preventing persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All outdoor play areas were securely enclosed with high-level fencing and gated access points. Safety mechanisms on gates were positioned out of children's reach, ensuring secure boundaries while allowing supervised access.
- The internal staircase leading to the preschool rooms on the upper floor was fitted with a sturdy handrail, well-lit, and finished with non-slip flooring to reduce the risk of falls. Children were consistently reminded by staff to use the handrail when transitioning between floors, whether heading outdoors or departing at home time.
- Cleaning products were stored safely, either on elevated shelving or within designated storage units, making them inaccessible to children and reducing potential hazards.
- The water temperature at children's wash-hand basins was regulated via thermostatic controls, ensuring it remained within the recommended safe limit of 43°C to prevent scalding and support safe hygiene practices.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.

Infection Control:

- Up-to-date cleaning schedules were in place and available for review. These schedules outlined routine cleaning practices across the service, supporting the maintenance of a hygienic and well-kept environment. Playrooms and equipment appeared clean and well-maintained,
- Ventilation across the service was provided through a combination of openable windows and mechanical systems. These were actively in use in all rooms, including sanitary areas, ensuring adequate airflow and air quality.
- Foot pedal-operated bins were positioned throughout the premises to support the hygienic disposal of waste and reduce hand contact.

- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels. Older children were observed to wash their hands with support, before snacks, meals.
- Nappy changing practices observed during the inspection reflected effective infection control procedures, with staff adhering to hygiene protocols. Aprons and gloves were available and observed in use by staff when changing of a child was required.
- Children were consistently supported to wash their hands at appropriate times, including before meals, after outdoor play, and following toileting or nappy changes, reinforcing good hygiene habits.
- Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes.

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with staff members, they were knowledgeable about the medication management policy within the service.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had two designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.
- Standard cots were available for babies under two years of age.
- Stackable floor beds and floor mats were available for children over two years of age.
- All standard cots had the required waterproof coverings and cellular blankets were provided.

Fire Safety:

- The fire assembly point was clearly displayed in the car park of the service.
- Fire evacuation notices were displayed on the walls of the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. During the inspection, wires connected to monitoring equipment were observed positioned above a cot where a child was sleeping. This setup may present a potential safety concern, as loose or exposed wires within reach of children could pose a risk.

2. During the inspection, it was noted that a prescribed inhaler for one child was not stored in the labelled box designated for it. Instead, the inhaler was found in a separate, unlabelled container. This could lead to confusion or delay in accessing the medication in the event of an emergency.

Fire Safety:

3. During the inspection, fire doors within the service were observed to be propped open using wedges. This practice may compromise the intended function of fire doors, which are designed to prevent the spread of smoke and fire in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

- (1) The wires were high out of reach of children but are now placed in trunking to ensure they cannot be reached.
- (2) All inhalers are now placed in each room first aid box to ensure they are not displaced. Going forward during room and staff meetings with will be added to reminders

Fire Safety:

- (3) The wedges have been discarded and no longer in use in the service to prop open the kitchen door behind the stair gate. The wedges have now been permanently removed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) Photographic evidence provided of wires out of reach of children.
- (2) No evidence submitted.

Fire Safety:

- (3) No evidence submitted as wedges have now been removed from the service.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-*
- (a) *the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) *the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) *the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) *a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
 - (b) *the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*
- (3) *A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-*
- (a) *include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*
 - (b) *be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A complaints policy was in place in the service and adequately outlined the following.
- (a) Details of the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service.
 - (b) Details of the manner by which a complaint will be dealt with by the service.
 - (c) Details of the procedures in place outlining how the person who makes such a complaint in relation to the service will be informed of the manner by which the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2) (a) (b) The person in charge stated that no complaints had been made directly to the service since the last date of inspection.
- (3) (a)(b)
- The person in charge stated they are aware of their obligation to detail the nature of any complaint made and the manner in which it will be dealt with. The person in charge stated a record of any complaint made will be kept in the service and available for inspection on the premises.