

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL140
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Name of Service:	Shining Lights Creche Ltd
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Address of Service:	23 Glen Park, Fox Hills, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 E2C6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aoife Dorrian
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	63	PM	41
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate TUSLA Child & Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen L. Costello
Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Shining Lights Crèche Ltd. is one of two private childcare services operated by the registered provider in Letterkenny town. Full day, part time and sessional care and education is provided for children aged 0-6 years old. The service is registered to provide school age childcare. Opening hours are from 07:45am-18:00hrs, Monday Friday. The service operates from a purpose-built premises on the outskirts of the town, six pre-school rooms, a kitchen, office and staff room are provided and play areas are located at the rear and sides of the building. Car parking is available outside the premises.

Staffing

On the day of inspection, there were 15 adults present in the service, including the registered provider who was, 12 staff members working directly with the children, one chef responsible for meal preparation, and one student currently on placement within the service.

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 9,10,11,16,19,23,25,26 27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 Record in relation to a preschool service.

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.

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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) (b).

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(2) (a) (b).

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that five new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection.

There was also a student on placement. The records of all 5 adults employed in the service were reviewed.

- a) Eight written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of Five adults employed in the service.

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- c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for twenty-two adults employed in the service, and one student on placement. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- d) International police vetting was available in respect of one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.

(4)

Four 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 the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

For the purpose of this inspection, a sample of the required written policies, procedures and statements that are specified and required under schedule 5 of these regulations were reviewed. The following policies, procedures and statements were included as part of this inspection:

- (a) Statement of purpose and function.
- (b) Policy on administration of medication.
- (c) Policy on infection control.
- (d) Policy on managing behaviour.
- (e) Policy on safe sleep.
- (f) Fire safety policy.
- (j) Policy on accidents and incidents.
- (l) Policy on healthy eating.
- (r) Risk management policy.

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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 an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the preschool service. There were 12 adults working directly with 63 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection and 11 adults working directly with 41 children in the afternoon. There was an additional staff member available to cover breaks throughout the day.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

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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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

1 (a)-(k)

On the day of the inspection, it was found that the service kept a record of the required information as outlined below.

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and employees were available.
- (b) The class of service and age profile of the children for which the service is registered for was 0-6 years.
- (c) Details of the adult to child ratios were available on the daily attendance records.
- (d) The type of care programme provided.
- (e) The facilities available were full day care and a sessional service which offers the Early childhood care and

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education programme (ECCE).

- (f) The opening hours and fees were displayed in the hallway of the service.
 - (g) The policy book was reviewed, and the service was found to keep a record of the policies, procedures and statements required under Regulation 10.
 - (h) Daily attendance records containing the time of the children's arrival to and departure from the service were observed in a sample of records reviewed on the attendance register.
 - (i) The staff roster detailed staff attendance.
 - (j) There were medicine administration records on file in each care room.
 - (k) Records of accident or incident forms were kept on file in each care room.
- 3) The person in charge made the records available to the inspector on request in the service.

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(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) (b)

The service promoted healthy eating, and food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. On the morning of inspection, children were observed enjoying a range of healthy snacks. The service has implemented a rolling snack system, allowing children to choose when they are ready to eat. The main meal of the day consisted of pasta, mince, carrots, broccoli, and potatoes. Water was provided in individual bottles that were left at the door of the playrooms for easy access for the preschool children throughout the day. Younger children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to their age and stage of development. Staff were observed feeding babies pre-made bottles in the 'Little Angels' room in an adult armchair. Appropriate child-sized tables and chairs were available for the children, while babies were observed in highchairs. Staff members were

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observed speaking and singing with the children during dinner time and using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction. Dinner time was not rushed, and each child was given the time they needed to finish their food. Children were observed using the toilet independently, with adults in the rooms available to support if required. Nappy changing was observed to be carried out regularly, promptly, and as needed during the inspection. The process was managed in a positive and sensitive manner. Appropriate hand-washing practices were encouraged throughout the session before snacks and after messy play. Bibs, aprons and spare clothes were available to the children for messy play activities and during feeding time if they required a change of clothing during the session. There was ample room in the large playrooms for children to move freely and be active in their play. The indoor environment is thoughtfully designed to promote and develop independence, with children observed moving freely and engaging contentedly in both individual and group play. Across the 'Dazzling Lights,' 'Shining Lights,' and 'Rainbow Lights' rooms, purposefully defined interest areas—such as home corners, construction areas, and creative art stations—stimulate imagination and role-play. Low shelves with puzzles and sensory trays allow children to easily choose activities that build their problem-solving and fine motor skills. Language development is encouraged through cosy, well-equipped library spaces, while older children's progress is captured through personalized social stories that document their learning journeys. The 'Little Angels' baby room provides a bright, secure soft play areas, visual ceiling displays, and stable props for early walkers, complemented by adult-sized seating for supportive one-to-one care and feeding.

In all the playrooms, family photographs were displayed maintaining a vital link to home. Staff were observed on the day of inspection responding to the children's needs appropriately by getting down to their level, using soft tones and making eye contact with them when they were speaking. Staff were observed to be responsive to the interactions of the children during play, helping three children who were having a disagreement over a toy listen to each other; they spoke about the importance of taking turns and sharing resources and encouraged "kind hands" with the babies. On the day of inspection, the children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage with. Turn-taking and sharing were promoted, which was evidenced by many children working collaboratively together, unprompted. Children were eased into the transition of the day through clean-up songs and verbal prompts from the staff. It was evident from the children's behaviour that they were familiar with the normal routine of the day. Children's artwork was displayed on the walls, and each child had a folder with all their artwork that they had completed. Ongoing observation and assessment were documented for each child on an electronic device which the parents could access through their phones at any time. Each child had their own profile, and information was inputted on a daily or weekly basis, which helped create a complete, well-rounded picture of each child's experience in the preschool. There was a

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planning wall with short-term and long-term plans for the children. Staff informed the inspector that outdoor play forms an integral part of the daily routine and children spend time each day engaged in physical play outdoors.

The service provides three distinct outdoor zones:

- **Side Play Area 1:** This secure outdoor area features tarmac and concrete surfaces, providing a safe space for children to engage in active, physical play. It features a variety of age-appropriate equipment, including a wooden teepee, a covered sand tray, seesaws, and a climbing structure made from tyres.
- **The Rear Garden:** This large, securely fenced space offers a rich sensory environment with diverse surfaces like bark, mud, gravel, and artificial grass. Mature trees and bushes create a natural feel. A polytunnel, which is furnished with tables and chairs to provide a dedicated, sheltered space for outdoor lessons and activities.
- **Side Play Area 2:** This additional covered zone is surfaced with artificial grass and secured with locked gates for safety. It encourages imaginative and physical play through a "sandpit kitchen," a small wooden climbing frame, and ride-on bikes.

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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, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- In the outdoor area, the equipment and materials in use on the day were well maintained and free from hazards. Records demonstrated that a risk assessment was carried out by staff prior to the use of the outdoor play area.

Infection Control:

- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning schedules displayed and up to date in each care room.
- An alert system was in place for children with allergies and food intolerances.

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with the staff members in the service, they were knowledgeable about the service medication administration policy.
- Support plans were available for children with medical needs.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff conducted and recorded 10-minute sleep checks, monitoring each child's breathing, position, and colour.
- Children were actively supervised during sleep, with staff present in the room where children were on floor beds.

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- Room temperature was maintained within the recommended range to ensure a safe and comfortable sleep environment.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation routes were clear from hazards on the day of inspection.
- Fire evacuation routes were clearly displayed on the wall of the care rooms.
- Emergency fire doors remained unobstructed on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- After rolling snack children were not always supported or prompted to wash their hands immediately after finishing their snack, which is a necessary step in preventing the spread of infection
- Foot-operated bins, which are essential for touch-free waste disposal, were found to be not working in three separate rooms.
- The bathroom adjacent to 'dazzling lights' had two sinks with no access to hot water for effective hand hygiene as the hot water tap was not working on the day of inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- Staff in the rooms have been alerted of this and are now keeping a closer eye on children after they are finished snack and encouraging them to wash their hands after eating. Same as above- to guide children to ensure the step of washing hands after snack
- The mechanism at back of bin had clicked out- needed to be clicked back in again to allow the pedal to work. To include these in our daily checklist- that if the mechanism comes loose to ensure to correct and fix it back on
- Both rooms tap have been fixed and the flow of hot water is now working. Plumber has altered the pressure of hot water getting to these two rooms. To ensure the girls report an ongoing issue such as the water flow from taps

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

- No picture provided as it's a procedure that need to be carried out.
- Photographic evidence of bins working correctly submitted.
- Photographic evidence of water pressure working correctly submitted.

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Summary Comment

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

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 demonstrated by way of certification that there was a sufficient number of adults trained in first aid for children available to the preschool children during operational hours of the service.

(2) (a) (b)

First aid boxes equipped with sufficient in date resources and materials were safely stored in a conspicuous location and available to preschool children as required.

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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 registered provider demonstrated that preschool children are supervised at all times through staff positioning across indoor and outdoor environments. Staff work effectively as a team, communicating clearly to maintain coverage during transitions or when supporting individual children. Supervision is active and attentive, with staff engaging directly during activities and mealtimes. During sleep periods, ten-minute checks are conducted for children in cots, while staff remain present with those on floor beds. Furthermore, the indoor and outdoor areas are purposefully designed to minimize blind spots and ensure children remain within sight and sound.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service provided certification of insurance for a full day care service for 101 preschool children up until 28 March 2026.