

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY009
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Name of Service:	Apple of My Eye
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Address of Service:	Unit 9, Meakstown Commercial Centre, Finglas, Dublin 11
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Eircode:	D11 KP08
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Name of Registered Provider:	Maria Toomey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	45	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Area 1 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Nelson and C. Harte
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

Apple of My Eye is a full day care service located in a residential area in Finglas Dublin 11 and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 56 children aged 1 to 6 years old, Monday to Friday. The service operates two Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme sessional services from 9.30am to 12.30pm and 1.00pm to 4.00pm.

Apple of My Eye operates from a two-storey adapted commercial unit and has four care rooms to include the Wobbler Room (1 to 2 years old), Toddler room (2 to 3 years old), and Junior Cubs room (3 to 5 years old). The Tigers Preschool room (3 to 5 years old) operates on a sessional care basis in the mornings and afternoons. There are sanitary facilities located off the care rooms with further sanitary facilities available for staff. There is an office and a cot room located on the ground floor, and a sensory room and staff room on the first floor. A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 14 staff to work in the service. There were 12 staff present throughout the day of the inspection, including the person in charge. The registered provider does not work in the service but was present on the afternoon of the 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

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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 Regulations 9, 11, 19, 22 and 23.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of child and Regulation 22 Food and Drink. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler and Toddler rooms.

Regulation 11 Staffing Levels and Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of the child was assessed across all 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, deputy 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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) The registered provider ensured that;

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.**
- (b) A review of the roster showed either the person in charge or a named deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service and this was further evidenced by a discussion with staff.**
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was further evidenced by a discussion with staff.**

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- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider it was determined that there were no new staff members since the previous inspection in October 2025. The file of a relief staff member whose file was not reviewed on that last inspection and the Garda vetting disclosures for two adults were requested for review.
- The registered provider had completed the following checks:
- (b) Two validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the three reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Documentary evidence was available that established that no adults required international police vetting.
- (3) Documentary evidence available showed that all of the checks outlined in (2) had been carried out prior to any of the adults having contact with the children in the service.
- (4) There was documentary evidence available that the staff member who worked directly with children attending the service held a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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 children.
- There were 10 staff available to 45 children present on the morning of the inspection.
 - There were 8 staff available to 22 children present on the afternoon of the inspection.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were maintained correctly throughout the inspection. The person in charge and deputy person in charge was available to provide cover for breaks thereby maintaining ratios.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The registered provider ensured that the following facilitated the children's learning, development and wellbeing:

Basic Needs:

- Children were observed to have the opportunity to move freely through their care room and independently access play experiences of their choice. Child led play was observed throughout the day.
- Experiences such as mealtimes were observed to be pleasant and sociable experiences, where staff and children were observed to be seated together during lunch engaging in conversation.
- Appropriate verbal and nonverbal strategies to manage children's behaviours were observed, for example low tones, eye level contact, touch, offering solutions and other strategies were observed.
- Documented plans were available outlining children's strengths and areas where they may struggle, which can assist in supporting a child's behaviour.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff were observed to be responsive to the needs of children and responded to their cues in a prompt manner. For example, when the children indicated they had had enough of outdoor play by standing by the door, staff immediately began the transition indoors.
- Staff were familiar with the children and their care needs. For example, they were familiar with the food preferences of the children
- Staff were observed to interact with children using touch and comfort, and this was used for an extended period of time when a child was observed to be upset.

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Physical and Material Environment:

- The toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving, visible and accessible to the children, and were grouped in themed areas of interest such as home area, mark making, construction, and library areas. Staff reported they are working with an external support agency to continue to develop their play environment.
- Toys and equipment including books were observed to be in good condition, and suitable for the age and stage of the children in the care rooms. Staff reported there was an additional supply of books available.
- Cosy areas were available in each of the care rooms to provide a comfortable space for children to engage in more restful activities.

Programme of Activities:

- There was a routine displayed in the care room, and this was reflected in the practice on the day. Staff were familiar with the routine and communicated their plan as to what will happen next effectively.
- Transitions between activities such as play to mealtimes and mealtimes to sleep were observed to be managed in a prompt and seamless manner. Staff were observed to give verbal indications ahead of a transition.
- The rooms were set up with prompts for play activities, and there was a document displayed reminding staff to ensure the rooms were set up ready for play in this manner.
- Documented evidence of children's activities was maintained, which included evidence of their activities such as artwork and photos and notes detailing what they are interested in and what can be done to extend their learning.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service ensured there was adequate and suitable food and drinks available. For example:

- The service followed a four-week menu plan, and the documentary evidence available showed there was a varied selection of food available, with alternative options for children with additional or alternative diets.
- Food offered throughout the day included breakfast on arrival, a hot meal at approximately 11.15am, a light snack at 1.00pm, a hot meal at approximately 2.45pm and light snack at 4.00pm.
- The meals on offer on the day of the inspection were honey-fried chicken with rice in the morning, and pork bolognaise with pasta in the afternoon. Suitable hot vegetarian options were available for both meals.
- Children were observed to have additional portions available for both meal options.
- Drinking water was freely available in the care rooms throughout the day.

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

The following measures were observed to be taken to safeguard children:

General Safety:

- The internal doors were observed to be secured throughout the inspection, with door handles up high out of reach of children and coded locks in place at the doorway to each floor. This restricted the unsupervised movement of children throughout the premises.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed and free of hazards, and there was a daily risk assessment in use to support this.

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- The hallways and stairway were free from any trip hazards.
- Furniture and shelving were observed to be stable and secured.

Infection Control:

- Children were supported to handwash after outdoor play and prior to mealtimes.
- Children were supported to observe appropriate hygiene procedures around food; for example, a child was reminded not to bring food near to the sanitary area, and to return to the table while eating.
- The premises appeared to be in a clean condition, and up to date cleaning records were available to facilitate this.

Safe Sleep:

- The temperature of the rooms while children were sleeping was observed to be within the recommended temperature range for children over one year old of 18 to 22°C.
- Staff were observed to carry out physical checks on sleeping children every ten minutes, and a record of these checks was maintained.

Fire Safety:

- The procedures for evacuation were clearly displayed, with the exit code for the external gate displayed clearly.
- Emergency exits were adequately secured and clear of obstructions.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The temperatures of the following radiators which were uncovered and accessible to children exceeded the recommended temperature of 43°C, and as a result posed a potential scald risk to the children.
 - A temperature of 52.1°C was recorded at 10.08am on a radiator in the first-floor hallway. It is acknowledged that this radiator was switched off and no longer posed an immediate scald risk to the children.
 - A temperature of 45.6°C was recorded at 10.09am on a radiator in the Tigers preschool room.
2. Blind cords were observed to be unsecured and potentially accessible to the children in the Toddler room which could pose serious injury risk. It is acknowledged these were removed out of reach of children when brought to the attention of the staff in the care room.
3. The water temperature in the wash hand basin accessible to the children in the Tigers preschool room exceeded the recommended temperature of 43°C. A temperature of 45.1°C was recorded by the inspector at 10.17am. This posed a scald risk to the children.

4. The nappy changing unit which was fixed to the wall in the Junior Cubs room was not suitable for the age range of children in the room who used it. The unit was recommended for the use of infants under the age of 12 months and the children in the care room who used the unit were aged over three years old. This posed a potential risk of becoming unsecured or unstable causing a risk of injury.
5. A cleaning spray was observed to be potentially accessible to children in the sanitary room used by the children in the Tigers preschool room. This posed a potential risk to the safety of children.
6. The following trailing flexes were accessible to the children which posed a potential injury risk to children:
 - The press under the sink in the Tigers preschool room was unsecured and a set of fairy lights was accessible.
 - The cable from the audio monitor in the cot room.

Infection Control:

The following increased the potential risk of infection:

7. Hand towels were not hygienically dispensed in the sanitary room used by the children in the Tigers preschool room. The paper-roll available required repeated touch of the inner tube, increasing the risk of potential cross contamination.
8. There were no toilet rolls accessible to the children in Toddler Sanitary. Children should have access to dispensed toilet rolls to facilitate hygienic toileting.
9. The laminate on the door of the press in the Tigers preschool room was cracked leaving a surface that could not be effectively cleaned.
10. The foot pedal mechanism on the nappy bin in the Toddler sanitary room was not working effectively. Hand touch was required to fully open the bin.
11. Laundry set out to dry on a radiator was observed to be trailing on the floor, which increased the risk of cross contamination.
12. The following increased the risk of cross contamination as the surface did not facilitate effective cleaning:
 - The soft play matting in the sensory room was observed to be partially frayed on the corners, with foam exposed, and the surface of some of the mats had a sticky residue.
 - The soft play matting in the Wobbler room was observed to be partially frayed on the corners, with foam exposed.

Administration of Medication:

13. A child's inhaler was observed to be stored in a child's bag, which was potentially accessible to children and was not in line with the service policy on the storage of medication

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14. Expired medication, which was stored in a child's medication bag was not disposed of in line with safe practice and the service policy on the storage of medication.

Safe Sleep:

15. The service did not adhere to safe sleep practice in line with national guidance and their safe sleep policy.

The following was observed:

- Children were put to sleep in their cots lying down with bottles. It is acknowledged staff removed the bottles.
- A child was observed to be asleep with a cuddly toy. Although checks were completed on the child, these checks did not remove the toy after they went asleep. This was identified as a noncompliance on the last inspection on the 21 October 2025 and the preventive action put in place failed to prevent a recurrence.

Safe sleep guidelines recommend that children should not sleep with bottles, toys or other items.

Fire Safety:

16. The details of the attendance of the children in the Tigers preschool room were not recorded on the day of the inspection. Staff reported a fault with the software used to record the attendance of the children on the day of the inspection; however, an alternative method of recording was not used.

Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children in an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider reports that new head valves (individual temperature controls) had been fitted to all radiators a week prior to the inspection, and this caused the temperatures of some of the radiators to be above 43°C. The temperature of all radiators was re-set to be below 43°C when the issue was raised on the day of the inspection. The current risk assessment checks the temperatures of radiators.
2. One blind cord was removed, and the other secured properly on the day of the inspection. The service will ensure checks of blind cords will be carried out weekly and report that staff are aware that they must be vigilant to alert management to any safety issues regarding the blinds and their cords.
3. A device was fitted to the tap to restrict the water temperature, which is now reported as being within the correct range. The service will continue to assess the water temperature.

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4. The service report they will no longer use the nappy change unit and have a new process for nappy changing for the children in the room who may require a nappy change.
5. The service report that cleaning products were removed on the day of the inspection and have displayed a notice to ensure cleaning agents are no longer stored in the area.
6. The service report that fairy lights were removed from the press in the Tigers room on the day of inspection. The audio monitor is usually kept on the shelf in the cot room, and it was reinstated to this position on the day of inspection, once the issue was raised. A memo was sent to all staff highlighting safe practice.

Infection Control:

7. The service report that staff were advised of the importance of having hand towels appropriately dispensed. Daily sanitary area checklists were issued for staff to complete 3 times per day, to ensure sanitary areas remain compliant at all times.
8. The service report that staff were advised of the importance of having toilet rolls appropriately dispensed. Daily sanitary area checklists were issued for staff to complete 3 times per day, to ensure sanitary areas remain compliant at all times.
9. A waterproof tape was fixed to press door, leaving the surface wipeable.
10. The nappy bin was removed and replaced with a different foot pedal bin on the day of the inspection, once the issue was raised. The registered will ensure appropriate bins will be purchased for use in the future.
11. The trailing laundry was removed, and staff were reminded of hygienic laundry practice.
12. The service report that the sensory room mats which were damaged have been disposed of and the corners of the soft play cube in the Wobbler room have been sealed with waterproof tape. They will ensure to monitor the condition of the equipment as part of risk assessments.

Administration of Medication:

13. The inhaler was removed immediately. The registered provider will ensure medication will no longer be stored in bags.
14. The expired medication was immediately removed and the service report that medication expiry date and condition checks have been added to their weekly risk management checklists.

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Safe Sleep:

15. The service will ensure that bottles are now given in the wobbler room before the children are brought into the cot room and that toys will be removed once a child has fallen asleep. Staff were reminded of the safe sleep policy, and a notice is displayed in the cot room.

Fire Safety:

16. Staff were reminded of the procedure of recording attendance in the event that they are unable to log attendance using the tablet.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence and risk assessment
2. Photographic evidence.
3. Photographic evidence and risk assessment.
4. Photographic evidence.
5. Photographic evidence.
6. Photographic evidence, memo to staff.

Infection Control:

7. Documentary evidence.
8. Documentary evidence.
9. Photographic evidence
10. Photographic evidence.
11. Memo to staff.
12. Photographic evidence.

Administration of Medication:

13. Photographic evidence.
14. Photographic and documentary evidence.

Safe Sleep:

15. Photographic evidence, memo to staff.

Fire Safety:

16. Memo to staff.

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Summary Comment

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