

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL004		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	ABC Playgroup		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	21 Glenellen Crescent, Swords, Co. Dublin		
<b>Eircode:</b>	K67 W6H0		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Valerie Byrne		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	07/11/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	11	PM Not applicable
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, 4/5, The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	Y Kelly		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.		

### Description of service

ABC Playgroup is a sessional preschool service registered to accommodate up to 16 children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is located within a private dwelling in a suburban area of Co. Dublin. An assigned side entrance leads to the area of the property designated for use as the sessional preschool consisting of one care room, two toilets and an outdoor play area. The service participates in the Early Childhood care and Education scheme (ECCE) offering free preschool to eligible children. The service is open 38 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday, 9.15am to 12.15pm.

### Staffing

On the day of the inspection, there were 2 members of staff present working directly with the children. The registered provider was present and works directly with the children on a daily basis and an early years practitioner was present on the day. There was a transition year student present in the service in a supernumerary capacity on the day of inspection as part of a work experience placement.

### Methodology

Tusla Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the regulations 9, 11, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26 and 28.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Playgroup.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

## Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (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)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09.25am and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The files for three people including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was recorded:

(a) Four written validated references were available from past employers.

(b) References from a reputable source other than a past employer were not required as all references were from a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 3 people whose files were reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring the service to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 2 staff members whose files were reviewed and who may work directly with the children in the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) The registered provider had not ensured the following:

Two written and validated references were not available for the transition year student.

(3) The procedures as outlined in paragraph (2)(c) were not carried out prior to a person working with or having access to children in the service.

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

#### Corrective Action

(2)(a)(b) The registered provider received two references for the transition year student and has them on the premises now.

#### Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)(3) To always make sure any students who are completing work experience will always have 2 references sent before they start.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

- Two written and validated references for the transition year student.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 9 has been addressed.

### 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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of the inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 2 adults, including the registered provider and early years practitioner working with 11 children aged 2 years and 8 months to 4 years 11 months on the morning of the inspection. In addition, to this there was a transition year student on a work experience placement.

### 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 following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

#### Basic needs:

- Mealtimes were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Staff sat with children at snack time and engaged in conversations with the children. Children's lunches and water bottles were brought from home and included rolls, rice cakes, cheese and crackers, yoghurts and fruit including apples

and bananas. Children's water bottles were accessible to the children and stored on a shelf in the room and children were observed to access water bottles independently.

- Children's independence was supported. Children washed their hands independently and got their water bottles before snack time. Children were encouraged to tidy up after their snack time. Children also used the bathroom independently with staff support as needed. Throughout the session, children were given responsibilities such as helping to give out the lunch boxes at snack time.
- There was no outdoor play on the day of the inspection due to adverse weather conditions. However, the staff discussed that they facilitate music and dancing with the children during adverse weather conditions. This supports gross motor and fundamental movement skills for the children.

### Supporting relationships:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children and children were given praise and encouragement. Children were offered comfort and support when needed. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service.
- Staff were observed interacting with children at their level and engaging in children's play, for example playing at the sandpit and discussing concepts of weight with the children by looking at the dial on the weighing scales.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, children's photographs and names and the children's art and 'All About Me' flower was displayed on the wall in the service.
- Staff discussed that they communicate and share weekly updates with parents using an online messaging application.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; children were given 10-minute verbal and visual cues using a timer to support them with the transitions. The children engaged well with tidying up, putting items away independently, whilst singing the tidy up song. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.

### Programme of Activities:

- Children's learning and development is documented in children's learning journals which include photographs of children's learning and development and children's artwork. Staff carry out monthly planning which informs the curriculum.
- Staff carried out small activities to include glueing and sticking and colouring in.

## Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

- There was age-appropriate furniture with child sized chairs and tables for children to sit whilst they played or for mealtimes.
- The room was divided into areas of interest which provided opportunities for a variety of spontaneous play experiences and choice for the children. Interest areas included a home corner with kitchen, dolls, highchair and buggies and a hair salon area to support imaginative and interactive play. In addition, there was a sand pit with buckets and spades for sensory play and art materials including such as paint, glue and playdough materials to support creative art and mark making for children. There were tabletop materials such as jigsaws and puzzles to support fine motor development. Small world items included a dolls house, animals, people and cars to support children’s imaginative and dramatic play.
- There was a cosy/book area in the service consisting of a small child sized sofa and books for children to sit and relax in this area when they chose.
- An outdoor play area was available for children. The equipment and materials included ride in and ride on cars, ride on bikes, scooters, 2 slides, 2 see-saws. The outdoor area was secure and surfaced with grass and paving stones and there was a covered area for children to play in adverse weather.

## 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:

- On arrival to the service, the inspector observed that the door was secure and monitored by staff.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

##### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and dispensed paper towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation of the service. Children were observed washing hands independently before snack time.
- Children's lunch which was brought from home, was refrigerated to prevent spoiling of perishable items.

##### Administration of Medication:

- There were health care plans available and displayed in the care room for children who required them.
- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

##### Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of an emergency evacuation.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 25 - First aid

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-
- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and
  - (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

#### Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and a staff member trained in FAR was available on the premises throughout the opening hours of the service. The registered provider was trained in First Aid Response (FAR) who was present on the day of the inspection. It is acknowledged that 1 staff member also held current paediatric first aid training who was present on the day of the inspection.
- (2)(a) An adequately stocked first aid box was observed in the care room of the service.
- (b) The first aid box was stored out of the reach of the children but available to staff as needed.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
  - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

#### Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured the following:
- (a) A record of monthly fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on 21 October 2025.
  - (b) The number, type and maintenance record for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on 31 July 2025. Fire alarm and detection system was last serviced on 12 June 2025.
- (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the care room of the service.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 22 children for the morning session with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.