

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015FL018 | | | |
| Name of Service: | Balbriggan Community Childcare | | | |
| Address of Service: | Tankardville House, Brecan Close, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin | | | |
| Eircode: | K32 WY80 | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Jean Fay Brady | | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 28/01/2026 | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 27 | PM | 16 |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building, Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin | | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | E Hosford and Á Dunne | | | |
| 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.

Description of service

Balbriggan Community Childcare is a community service that operates from a single storey restored thatched cottage in Balbriggan town. Children aged from 1 to 6 years of age are accommodated in the service on a full day care, part-time and sessional basis. Childcare services are also provided to school aged children up to 12 years of age. The service operates from 7.15am to 6.00pm each weekday, catering for a maximum of 54 pre-school children. There are 5 care rooms in operation, namely the Farm Room, the Flower Room, the Under the Sea Room, the Jungle Room and the Sunshine Room. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is the chairperson of the Board of Management of a local community group and is present in the service on a regular basis carrying out administrative duties while not working directly with the children. Fourteen staff work in the service to include the service manager, deputy person in charge, eight childcare staff, a cook, caretaker and two staff employed under the community education scheme, one as maintenance and the other with the children. On the day of inspection, there were two students on placement in the care rooms.

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 9,11,19,21,23 and 25.

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

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

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

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the service on the 28 January 2026 in relation to Regulation 9- Management and Recruitment. On the 29 January 2026 the registered provider responded adequately to the IAN with the measures implemented within the service. Please see details in the body of the inspection report

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, service manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

(2) The staff files of three staff members employed in the service since the last inspection were reviewed along with one community employment staff member and two students on placement.

Garda vetting disclosures for 15 staff that work in the service and two students on placement were reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

(a) Seven validated written references were available from a past employer.

(b) Five validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 15 staff members employed in the service and the 2 students on placement. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.

(4) Three staff members who work directly with the early years children had documentary evidence of 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)
(c) A Garda vetting disclosure had not been obtained for one staff member employed in the service. An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the service on the 28 January 2026 in relation to Regulation 9- Management and Recruitment.
- (3) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the procedures outlined in paragraph (2) had not been completed for one staff member employed under the community employment scheme prior to starting in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)(c) In response to the non-compliance the registered provider has stated that Garda Vetting was applied for, and this was recently received. Going forward all Garda Vetting documents will be updated when they are supposed to be and in place before a staff member commences working in the service.
- (3) In response any outstanding information was obtained and will be in place before any staff member begins working in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)(c) Garda vetting
(3) Corrective action.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider regarding Regulation 9 were reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of inspection and remained so throughout the inspection.

- The Farm room- there was 1 adult caring for 4 children aged 1-2 years in the morning and afternoon.
- The Flower room- there were 2 adults and 1 student on work placement (in a supernumerary capacity) caring for 6 children aged 2-3 years of age in the morning and afternoon.
- The Sunshine Room there was 1 adult and 1 student on work placement (in a supernumerary capacity) caring for 5 children aged 3-5 years in the morning and 6 children in the afternoon.
- The Jungle room- there were 2 staff members caring for 7 children aged 4-5 years in the morning and the room was used for school age children in the afternoon.
- In the Under the Sea room there were 2 staff caring for 5 children aged 2.5- 4 years of age in the morning and the room was closed in the afternoon.

A staff member employed to cover breaks and relief for staff breaks and support to the care rooms when required was available

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained 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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- The service had a four-week menu which promoted healthy eating within the service. A breakfast of cereal and milk was available to the children, a morning snack of fruit and crackers followed by a hot meal of potato and vegetable casserole at lunch time. Children attending on a sessional basis in the Jungle and Under the Sea rooms had a snack from home which consisted of fruit, yogurts, cheese and sandwiches. Additional food was available to the children and water was served with each snack and meal. A healthy alternative meal was available if required by the children.
- The staff members sat with the children at mealtimes encouraging conversations and extending interactions to create a relaxed and sociable environment.
- Staff members were observed to be kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and the atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred.
- The children were observed using the toilet under supervision, with assistance provided by a staff member when necessary.
- Children were observed moving freely within the care rooms and outdoor area and taking a break from activities and relaxing in a rest area when required.
- All the children enjoyed outdoor play and were suitably dressed in rain suits and footwear.

Supporting Relationships

- Staff members were observed demonstrating sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences, and frequently initiated conversations with the children, responded

meaningfully to their verbal and non-verbal cues and provided regular praise and encouragement using a gentle tone of voice.

- The children were encouraged by the adults to take turns with their friends and share equipment and toys. Children were observed eagerly participating in story time in the Sunshine room while they waited for their lunch.
- Staff members were familiar with the children’s parents who could speak with staff at drop off and collection. The service engaged with parents via text message and an electronic application which updated them on planned activities, pictures of the children throughout the day and information regarding the service and upcoming events.
- Staff worked well together in supporting the children and were aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding maintaining flexibility with the daily routine to ensure the care was child led

Programme of Activities:

- Evidence was available in the care rooms and on the service corridor walls to demonstrate that activities were completed by the children to include snow animals, melted snowmen pictures, weather pictures, finger and hand painting and gluing.
- The children were busy in the care rooms and had the opportunity to extend their emerging interests and ideas with staff available to assist and support them.

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

- The care rooms promoted independent access to activities, equipment and materials, which were displayed on low shelving and accessible for children to choose their own work.
- Arts and craft materials were present to include paper, crayons and pencils.
- Rest areas were available in the care rooms to enable children to rest and take a break from activities, they consisted of soft mats, child size sofas, soft cushions and books.
- All materials and equipment in the care rooms were appropriate to the age and development of the child.

- The outdoor play area to the rear of the premises had wooden and metal fencing in place providing four separate spaces for designated groups of children. Surfacing included artificial grass, natural grass and hard-surfaced paths. The outdoor play equipment provided included ride on toys, plastic playhouses, slides, activity walls, balls and children's picnic benches.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The play kitchen in the outdoor area used by the children in the Farm and Flower room had no supporting materials such as cups, plates, pots or pans. This reduced the fun and enjoyment for the children and limited the possible learning opportunities for them.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. In response the registered provider has stated that kitchen toys were purchased for the garden. We will ensure that the toys in the garden are maintained and that there is enough supporting materials for children to engage in play such as pots, pans and play food.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Documentary and photographic evidence

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider regarding Regulation 21 were reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate.

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 premises and outdoor play area were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised people from gaining access to the service.
- The care rooms were observed to be suitable and safe with all cleaning agents, sharp implements, blind cords and flexes out of reach.
- Staff maintained a daily record of each child's arrival and departure to the service.
- Care plans for children that may require medical assistance were clearly displayed in the care rooms to include, their picture, date of birth, medical issue, signs and symptoms of ill health, actions to take and the contact details and phone numbers of parents and guardians. On discussion with staff, they were familiar with the procedures to take if required.

Infection Control:

- A refrigerator was available in the service to refrigerate perishable food items from home.
- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition throughout, with the premises and equipment observed to be visually clean.
- During the inspection it was observed that staff followed best practice guidelines with the cleaning and storage of soothers, children's bed linen and toys.
- Nappy changing was completed in accordance with best practice guidelines.
- Cots and floor mats were positioned 50cm apart at sleep time.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered to a child during the inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Safe sleep practices and procedures followed by staff were in line with best practice guidelines and the service policy. For example, the rooms were darkened and soft music played, ten-minute sleep checks were maintained on each child to include their colour, breathing and position. The temperature of the care rooms was recorded by staff and maintained between the recommended temperature of 18-22 °C while children slept.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire exits were illuminated and clear of any obstructions throughout the inspection

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The water temperature in the low sink used by the children in the Sunshine room was recorded as 55.7°C at 11:06am. This increased the potential risk of scalding a child.
- In the outdoor area used by the Farm and Flower room, at 11.14am, the children were observed picking at and playing with pieces of chipped wall paint. This increased the potential risk of a child ingesting the materials. It is acknowledged that after the inspector intervened and informed staff, the area was cordoned off by staff, stopping access to the wall.

Infection Control:

- Children in the Flower and Sunshine rooms were not prompted or facilitated to wash their hands on their return to the classroom following outdoor play. This increased the potential risk of cross infection.
- At lunch time the children were provided with bread and butter to eat, this was placed directly on the table and not placed on plates. This increased the potential risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- In response the registered provider has stated that a plumber came out and fixed the temperature to be 43 degrees. A thermostat control was fitted to control the temperature at a fixed temperature. We will have regular maintenance and temperature checks on taps.
- To address outdoor paint was purchased and our maintenance person has painted and will review it again if the paint peels off.

Infection Control:

- The hand-washing procedure was discussed with staff, and it is displayed in the classrooms. We will ensure that all staff follow updated handwashing procedures and ensure proper hand washing is done when coming in from the garden
- To address plates made available for everyone's bread and we will ensure that there is always adequate plates or serving utensils for the children's food.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary and photographic evidence
2. Documentary and photographic evidence

Infection Control:

3. Updated hand-washing procedure
4. Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider regarding Regulation 23 were reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate.

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

(2)(a) and (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and were safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in each classroom

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The service provided evidence that two adults were trained in First Aid Response (FAR), however, on review of the staff sign in and on discussion with staff, no staff member with FAR was available to the children from 7.15-9.00am on the day of inspection. It is acknowledged that a staff member with paediatric first aid was available to the children during this time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) In response the registered provider has stated that the staff roster was changed to ensure that the two staff members with FAR are on the premises at all times. Additional staff will be trained on a FAR course when a course becomes available.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Updated staff roster.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider regarding Regulation 25 were reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate.