

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL163
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Name of Service:	Little Crickets Preschool
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Address of Service:	Malahide Cricket Club, Dublin Road, Malahide, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K36 W920
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ann Bracken
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15.
Inspection undertaken by:	Á Dunne
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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

Little Crickets Preschool is a privately-owned sessional service location in the Malahide Cricket Club in Malahide, Co. Dublin. The service is registered to operate from 8.45 to 12.15 pm and provides a sessional service for pre-school children from 2 to 6 years of age and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from Monday to Thursday for 41 weeks each year. The service is conducted from one room in the cricket clubhouse. The service does not access any other space within the premises apart from the sanitary accommodation. An outdoor space to the rear of the premises is available to the service for outdoor play.

Staffing

The service employs four members of staff to include the registered provider, the person in charge and two childcare staff, one of whom is employed under the Access and Inclusion (AIM) scheme. There were three staff present on the day of inspection working directly with the children along with one support worker from an external agency.

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 9,11,15,19,23,24, 25, 26 and 29.

however, on inspection additional non-compliance was identified under Regulation 8. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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

(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 the registered provider, person in charge, two staff employed in the service along with one support worker from an external agency were reviewed.

The registered provider had two written references and ensured the following:

(2)(a) Five validated written references were available from a past employer, for the support worker.

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

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four adults employed in the service and for the support worker from an external agency. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no adult employed in the service had lived outside of the state for six consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentation was available to demonstrate that registered provider, three adults and the support worker from an external agency working directly with 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

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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in the service during the inspection.
- (3) On the day of inspection there were 3 adults and a support worker caring for 21 children aged from 2 to 6 years of age in the morning.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 12 records of the 22 records maintained for the total number of 22 children attending the service, were inspected and all were found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspector as an authorised person

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

Basic Needs:

- Lunchtime was at 11.25am for the children where the service provided brioche rolls, crackers, cheese and fruit.
- Lunchtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable event, with children given time to sit at low tables appropriate to their age. Children were observed to eat independently, but staff were on hand to help as required, supporting independence and wellbeing.
- The transitions between activities such as mealtimes and free play were observed to be calm and relaxed with staff available to care for the individual needs of the children.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Staff were observed to have respectful, warm and responsive interactions with the children through the use of soft tones and positive non-verbal communication strategies such as being at the children's level.

- Staff were observed to be engaged with and sit with the children during play time at tables and having positive interactions during play activities of colouring, reading books and building blocks. They were responsive to the children and were observed to give them choices regarding their play activities.
- Staff members supported each other in the provision of care to the children.

Physical and material environment:

- The care room was bright and resourced with well-maintained toys and play materials.
- Play equipment and toys were accessible to children in clear boxes or laid out in the areas of interest and child sized furniture supported children's independence.
- The materials and equipment provided to the children in the room was suitable to the age and stage of development of the children present.
- The children were observed to play with tabletop activities such as connecting shapes, wooden blocks, colouring, chalk and blackboards, making and playing with playdough, floor play with plastic building blocks, and playing in the home area with pots, pans, play food and delph, in the cosy area reading books and in the small world play area with small world people, playhouses and a play garage.
- The presence of a family wall, a birthday wall and artwork created by the children displayed on the walls provided a sense of identity and belonging in the service for the children.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Water was not readily available to the children at lunchtime at 11.25am or throughout the session. It is acknowledged that the children had water bottles in their bags stored in the entrance hall of the service but these were not readily accessible in the care room. Water to drink should be readily available to the children to support their hydration.
2. Outdoor play was not provided to twenty-one children attending ECCE hours of 9.00am to 12.30 pm on the day of inspection. Outdoor play provides children opportunities to develop gross motor skills, experience risky play, messy play and experience nature.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Children's water bottles were moved to main room to be readily available. A large water container is now available with disposable cups for children that may not have a water bottle with them. Water bottles will be lined up each morning in the main room. The Registered Provider will ensure that each child have a bottle available in the room. Alternatively, there is now a water dispenser available to facilitate a child that might not have their own bottle. This will be part of the daily morning risk assessment.

- The daily routine has been updated to include Outdoor play. Outdoor playtime has been implemented into the daily routine. Children will be taken outside in small groups each day.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographic Evidence
- Photographic Evidence

Summary Comment

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

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The main entrance into the premises was secure with an entry door with a bell , monitored by staff and the door of the care room was secure by a chain lock. This reduced the risk of unauthorised access to the service or the unsupervised exit of a child.
- The play equipment and materials in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good condition.
- The pre-school children were supervised at all times during the session.
- No trailing flexes were observed, and cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Handwashing facilities for hand hygiene included warm water, liquid soap, hand air dryers and paper towels when required.
- Children were supported and encouraged to wash their hands before snack time, after messy play and after toilet visits.
- Pedal operated lidded bins were available for waste disposal.

Fire Safety:

- Records demonstration that Fire drills were completed monthly.
- The emergency fire exit was clear and unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Children's lunches of brioche rolls, crackers, cheese and apples which were provided by the service, were placed directly onto open napkins on the tables, this can lead to cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. Washable plates have been purchased and will be provided at lunch time going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. Photographic Evidence

Summary Comment

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

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that the children were signed into the attendance book on arrival to the service and signed out when each child left the service.

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 service provided evidence that two adults were trained in First Aid Response and were available at all times to the children attending the pre-school.
- (2) (a) (b) Two first aid boxes was stored in a conspicuous position in the care room and was available to the children in the service at all times.

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)(a) A written record was reviewed by the inspector for fire drills completed and the last fire drill was recorded as being carried out on the 30 January 2026.
- (b) The number type and maintenance record for the firefighting equipment was available, demonstrating they were last serviced on 21 October 2025 and for the smoke alarms demonstrating they were last services on 20 October 2025.
- (4) The fire drill procedure was displayed on the wall of the care room.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

(c) The classroom room temperature was recorded as 18.3 °C at 10.36am and sanitary facilities room temperature was recorded as 18.0 °C at 10.42am.

(d) the service and the furniture were observed to be clean well maintained and in good repair

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The service is currently registered to operate as a sessional service from 8.45am to 12.15pm. On the day of inspection, on review of the attendance book and on discussion with the registered provider and staff it was confirmed that the service is currently operating from 9.00am to 12.30pm. This is at variance with the service registered status.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) Change in Circumstances form has been submitted. Times will be displayed as per the correct operating hours.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) Evidence of the approved Change in Circumstances.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the action taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 8 has been addressed.