

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL240		
Name of Service:	PALS Pre-School		
Address of Service:	Hampton Wood Point, Hampton Wood, Finglas, Dublin 11		
Eircode:	D11 X62D		
Name of Registered Provider:	Triona Tammemagi		
Service type:	Part Time		
Date 1 of Inspection:	15/05/2025		
Date 2 of Inspection:	16/05/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM n/a
Day 2	AM	18	PM n/a
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		
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

Description of service

PALS Preschool is a part time service located in a residential area in Finglas and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 24 children aged 3 to 6 years old, Monday to Friday. PALS is a charitable organisation offering early intervention care and education to children with a diagnosis of Autism. PALS operates from the ground floor of a purpose built premises and has four class rooms and a range of other support rooms to include a community playroom, a sensory room, an indoor play area, an office and meeting rooms. There are sanitary facilities located off each of the care rooms, and further sanitary facilities are available for staff. A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

PALS currently employs 34 staff to include: four management staff, four administration staff, 17 tutors, four speech and play facilitators and five support tutors. The registered provider does not work in the service. On Day 1 of the inspection there were 25 adults present, and 26 adults present on Day 2.

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation Regulations 9(7) Management and Recruitment and Regulation 16(1)(h)(i)k) Records in relation to Preschool Service.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included Classroom 4 and did not include Classrooms 1, 2 and 3.

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 children, person in charge and staff 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
- (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A review of documentary evidence showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and staff reported being aware of this.
- (2) A review of the roster and discussion with the person in charge established there were 34 staff employed in the service, and these full files were reviewed. The following checks had been completed:
- (a) Thirty-seven validated written references were available from recent past employers.
- (b) Thirty-one validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 34 staff members employed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documentary evidence showed that 12 staff members had lived in a state other than Ireland for more than six months as adults and international police vetting from that state was available for inspection.
- (4) Nine of the 30 staff who worked directly with children attending 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
- (7) A review of documentation and discussion with staff showed that all staff working directly with the children in the service had:
- (a) been provided with appropriate supervision and information and had received training on the policies and procedures in the service required under Schedule 5. The following was reviewed:
- Induction documentation for all 34 staff.
 - A review of documentation from clinical meetings held weekly and monthly planning and training days which had taken place since January 2025 showed training, and information had been provided on various topics.
- (c) been provided with appropriate supervision, information and training on topics including observations, interactions, behaviour management, child safeguarding, using the learning environment. The following was reviewed:
- Documentation from a sample of four training events.

- Probationary review documentation from a sample of ten staff including management.
- Documentation was available that all staff who worked directly with children had completed child safeguarding training and staff reported being aware of the relevant practice and procedures.

This was in line with the service staff training and supervision policy which was reviewed on the day.

Non-Compliance Information

- (3) The review of start dates showed one adult had commenced employment in the service prior to a reference being considered by the service. References should be verified prior to staff having contact with children in order to establish their suitability for the role.
- (4) Twenty-one of the 30 staff who worked directly with children attending the service did not hold the required qualification for an early years' service 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. It is acknowledged that staff held qualifications in disciplines such as psychology, speech and language and education however these qualifications do not meet the requirements.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (3) The reference was validated following what had been a delay in the translation of the reference. To prevent further occurrence, the service has implemented a pre-employment checklist, an internal audit system to review files, and additional training to management and administrative staff on timely reference verification.
- (4) Verifications of four qualifications deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality were submitted. The service operates under the Department of Education Home Tuition Grant Scheme which require staff to hold a qualification at a minimum of a Level 8 in a field such as teaching, psychology, speech and language therapy or social care in order to deliver an autism specific intervention model. The service commit to explore a resolution that acknowledged both the requirements of the Department of Education and Tusla regulatory requirements. They are in contact with the Department of Children, Disability and Equality to explore the possibility of an exemption for the requirement under regulation 9(4).

Supporting documentation submitted

- (3) Pre-employment checklist.
- (4) Verification of qualification, copy of letter to the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9(3) has been adequately addressed, regulatory compliance for Regulation 9(4) remains outstanding.

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 available to the children attending the service to meet their care needs.
 - There were 24 staff available to 18 children present on Day 1.
 - There were 24 staff available to 18 children present on Day 2.
 - Sufficient staff were available to provide cover for breaks, and to support children’s transition to activities, outdoor play and toileting.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were maintained correctly throughout the inspection.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1) The following records were reviewed

- (h) Attendance records detailing the daily arrival and departure of the children were maintained.
- (i) A record was maintained of the staff roster which was reflective of the staff present on the day.
- (k) Following a review of a sample of ten records, the registered provider ensured a full record in writing was maintained for accident and incidents.

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-

(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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) The following appropriate and suitable care practices were observed:

- Parents provided meals from home, and children’s drinks were visible to the children throughout the day. Staff reported parents are encouraged to provide healthy lunches and Friday was ‘fun with food’ day where fruit and foods of varying textures were introduced to the children. The mealtime was observed to be a relaxed, sociable experience where children could eat their meal at their leisure.
- Toileting and toilet training was observed to be a timely and respectful experience for the children. Positive strategies such as routine, repetition, encouragement and praise were observed.

- The staff interacted with the children in a responsive, respectful, warm and sensitive manner. Appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication such as low even tones, visual displays and choice boards were available and used throughout the premises.
- The experiences and activities provided to the children in the rooms were suitable to the age and needs of the children. For example, staff discussed the choice boards where children could choose their own activity. There was regular, scheduled movement through the play spaces in the setting, with children having access to the sensory room, individual learning stations for one-to-one work, the outdoor play area, and the community room where there was an emphasis on parallel and group play and planned role play, and imaginary play was facilitated following observation of the children.
- There was a fire-drill ‘grab-bag’ which contained the required safety items for fire drills, along with blankets and sensory toys to facilitate children’s comfort during fire drills.
- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated via an online software application, emails and meetings. Staff reported communication is via various means to suit the needs of the families, and a home notebook was sent home daily with updates on the child’s day.

(3) There were no harmful or disrespectful practices carried out. The following was observed:

- Documentary evidence was available that all staff had completed child safeguarding training. Staff were observed using appropriate practices and reported being aware of practices that were disrespectful or harmful to children and showed awareness of the procedures to report such practices. This was in line with the service code of behaviour for staff which was reviewed on the inspection.
- Children were supported to regulate and manage their behaviours through the use of a least intrusive ‘prompt hierarchy’, where a strategy of modelling required behaviour was used foremost, with direct physical contact discouraged, with the aim to promote children’s independent decision making around behaviours. This was in line with the behaviour management policy which was reviewed on the inspection.

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 external doors to the service were secured throughout the inspection with an electronic door release system. This was managed by staff in the reception area of the premises.
- A closed-circuit camera system was in use throughout the premises.
- Internal doors were secured with an electronic door release system managed by staff. This restricted the unsupervised movement of children throughout the premises.
- Window restrictors were fitted and in use.
- Documented care plans were clearly displayed for children who had a particular care need.
- Cleaning products and hazardous items were stored up high out of children's reach or in locked cupboards.
- Tall units were secured.

Infection Control:

- The premises were in a clean and hygienic condition and documented up to date cleaning records were available and displayed in the premises.
- Appropriate waste disposal systems were observed throughout the premises such as foot pedal operated bins.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use hand towels were available at all wash hand basins used by the children and the staff members.
- Children's lunches from home were appropriately refrigerated.

Administration of Medication:

- Documented care plans were available for a child who required specific medication, and staff were aware of the procedures for this.
- Medication was stored appropriately.

Fire Safety:

- Hallways and emergency exits were unobstructed.

- Children’s attendance was recorded accurately in the attendance logs and sign in and out logs were maintained for when children left the room for additional activities.

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 a person trained in First Aid Responder training was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school.

(2) (a) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in each of the class rooms and there were signs displayed indicating this.

(b) The first aid box was easily accessible.

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 record of fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on the 1 April 2025.

(b) An up-to-date maintenance record was available for the Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were serviced on 30 September 2024 and the smoke alarms were maintained on the 20 March 2025.

(4) A procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display in each of the care rooms and throughout the premises.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
- (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-

- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
- (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) There was a complaints policy maintained which outlined the following:

- (a) The procedures to be followed when making a complaint.
- (b) The way complaints would be dealt with.
- (c) The procedures for keeping the complainant informed on how the complaint is being dealt with.

(2) The registered provider ensured:

- (a) A record of a complaint was maintained.
- (b) That complaints were handled in line with the service policy.

(3) A review of records referred to in (2)(a):

- (a) Detailed the nature of a complaint and how it was handled.
- (b) The record was made available on the day of the inspection.