

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL245
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Play and Learn
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	68 Cianlea, Swords, Co. Dublin
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<b>Eircode:</b>	K67 W1R8
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Martine McConnell
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	21/01/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	21	PM	12
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	Á Dunne
<b>Title:</b>	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).	

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
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### Description of service

Play and Learn is a privately-owned full day care service in Swords, Co. Dublin. The service provides sessional, part-time and full day care for pre-school children from 2 to 6 years of age. Play and Learn is also registered to provide a school age service, although school aged children currently only attend the service during midterm breaks. Eligible pre-school children are facilitated to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 8.45 to 11.45am and from 12.00 to 3.00pm daily for 38 weeks each year. The service is registered to operate from 8.00am to 6.00pm from Monday to Friday, although all children currently attending have left the service by 4.00pm daily.

### Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs five staff members and all who work directly with the children. One of these staff members is employed in a post which is partly funded by the Minister under the Access and Inclusion Model scheme for children with additional needs.

### 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 9,11,19,23,25 and 26.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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, person in charge, 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

The files of the Registered Provider and 5 adults were reviewed,

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

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

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for six adults employed in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for one adult employed in the service who had lived outside of the state for six consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentation was available to demonstrate that registered provider and five adults 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.*

*(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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children as there were 6 adults working with 21 children in the morning and 6 adults working with 12 children in the afternoon.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained in the classroom on the day of inspection with 6 adults caring for 21 children in the morning and 6 adults were caring for 12 children in the afternoon.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that two adults were present on the premises during the operation of 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

#### Basic Needs:

- Lunchtime was at 11am for the children. The children's water bottles were available for the children to drink.
- 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 stamping, colouring, reading books, doing magnetics , painting and jigsaws. 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

- Low level shelving and child sized furniture supported children's independence.
- The materials and equipment provided to the children in the rooms were suitable to the age and stage of development of the children present. Children had the freedom to choose from materials and equipment available to them.
- A Cosy area was present offering a quiet comfortable area for children to rest and relax during the day on soft seats and a couch.
- The outdoor play area which was located to the rear of the premises was accessed directly from the care room. Near the back door leading outside from the care room, a wooden outdoor care room roofed with corrugated sheeting was in place which was open on one side and provided shelter from the weather when required. The room contained a play kitchen with supportive play equipment; a dolls house, a shop area, a work bench and tools; an art station; construction toys, cars trucks , two tables for tabletop activities.

The adjoining outdoor play area was covered in grass and contained a large wooden climbing frame with swings and slide attached, a well-resourced wooden outdoor kitchen, wall-mounted guttering on brackets for pouring activities, wooden balance beams, water and sand play pits, ride on toys and a wooden playhouse. Children's wet suits and wellies were stored in the outdoor room for use when required.

### 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 entrance to the service was secure with an electric gate and secure service entry door, monitored by staff. This reduced the risk of unauthorised access or the unsupervised exit of a child. The outdoor area was fully enclosed and secure.
- The play equipment and materials in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good condition.
- The temperature of the care room was recorded as 20.2°C at 10.56am, within the recommended ambient temperature of 18 - 22 °C.
- 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, and paper towels.
- Children were supported and encouraged to wash their hands before and after snack time and after toilet visits.
- Tables were cleaned in preparation for lunch, by the staff.
- Pedal operated lidded bins were available for waste disposal.
- Children's lunches which are brought from home were stored in a fridge to prevent spoiling of perishable item and then lunches were served on plates for each child.

##### Administration of Medication:

- A care plan was available for a child with an on-going medical condition, outlining the specific action to be undertaken by staff members for administration of regular medication. Seven medication administration forms with 26 administrations reviewed were complete and available.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. The daily attendance of children in the service was not accurately reflected in the service attendance records; at 11.30am 21 children were present but only 20 children were marked in as present in the service, leading to a risk of safety in the event of an evacuation. It is acknowledged that on highlighting by the inspector, the person in charge completed the attendance record immediately

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. A designated person will now look after registration books during drop off and home times.  
One specific person will take charge of registration books during drop off and home times  
make sure this does not happen again

#### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. None

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

### 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 three adults trained in First Aid Response were available at all times to the children attending the pre-school.

(2) (a) (b) A first aid box 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 9 January 2026.

(b) The number type and maintenance record for the firefighting equipment was available, demonstrating they were last serviced on 5 October 2025 and for the smoke alarms demonstrating they were last services on 9 January 2026.

(4) The fire drill procedure was displayed on the wall of the care room and observed by the Inspector.