

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL295
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Tadpoles Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Brookford Estate, Brooklane, Rush, Co. Dublin
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<b>Eircode:</b>	K56 AY17
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Ruth Dolan
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	18/09/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	58	PM	33
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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
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E Hosford and Á Dunne
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

	<b>Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</b> <b>QMS Ref: EYI-RRT12.1 V2.0 03/03/2023 Service ID: TU2015FL295</b>	<b>1 of 12</b>
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Tadpoles Childcare was established in 2007 as a privately owned Early Years service. The service provides full time, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children from 6 months until they commence attendance at primary school. School aged children up to 12 years of age are also accommodated in the service which currently operates from 7.15am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday. The service is situated a purpose built 2 storeys building in a housing development on the outskirts of Rush, North Dublin. There are 4 care rooms in the service namely the Baby/ Wobbler room and Toddler room which are located on the ground floor of the building and the Montessori room 1 and Montessori room 2 which are located on the first floor. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

### Staffing

The service employs a total of 18 staff to include the registered provider, designated person in charge, a chef and 15 childcare staff. The registered provider and the designated person in charge were available to help in the care rooms during the inspection.

### 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

The unannounced inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25 and 26. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 19 and 23.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby/Wobbler, Toddler and Montessori 1 and did not include Montessori 2.

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 inspectors wish 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

(2) The staff files of 18 staff employed in the service were reviewed.

(a) Twenty-four validated written references were available from a past employer.

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

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for 18 staff employed in the service. However, the service did not adhere 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. See Regulation 23.

(d) International police vetting was available from 4 countries for staff who had lived outside of the state for six months or more as adults.

(4) On review of documentation available 17 employees employed in the service and working directly with the children on the day of inspection had evidence to demonstrate that they held 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 during the inspection.

(2) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity on the day of inspection:

- In the **Baby/ Wobbler room** there were 8 children aged between 10 months to 2 years being cared for by 3 adults in the morning and 4 children in the afternoon.
- In the **Toddler room** there were 12 children aged between 1-2 years being cared for by 3 adults in the morning and 10 children being cared for by 2 adults in the afternoon.
- In the **Montessori room 1** there were 19 children aged between 2.5- 3years being cared for by 3 adults in the morning and afternoon.
- In the **Montessori room 2** there were 19 children aged 3- 4 years being cared for in the morning. School age children were present in the room in the afternoon.

Two additional staff members to include the registered provider and designated person in charge were available to provide support across the care rooms and provide relief for staff members to have their meal breaks.

(8)(a) On review of the service poster and on discussion with staff it was confirmed that 2 adults were always present 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 provided a breakfast of cereal and milk, a morning snack of sliced fruits and a hot meal at lunch time of chicken curry and rice. An afternoon snack of rice cakes and fruit and a tea of soup and brown bread. Drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the session and alternative and additional food was available at mealtimes if a child needed more.
- The children were observed using the toilet under supervision, with assistance provided by the staff member when necessary. Nappy changing was completed at set times and when required for younger children and older children were observed using the toilet under supervision, with assistance provided by the staff member when necessary.
- Children were observed moving freely within the care rooms and taking a break from activities and relaxing in a cosy corner in the care rooms which were equipped with soft matting and child size chairs.
- The children spent time in the outdoor area while enjoying the opportunity to explore and develop their gross motor skills of climbing and balancing.

##### Supporting relationships

- Parents and guardians were communicated with at drop off and collection and via an electronic application, which the staff members could also use to share information about the children and the activities undertaken during the day.
- Staff were observed working well together in supporting the children and transitioning from activities such as outdoor play and snack time.

- Staff supported parents when their child was settling into the service with a flexible approach being offered and available. Staff maintained daily records of each child's meals, sleeps, activities undertaken and nappy changes, these were shared with parents at collection.

### Physical Environment:

- The care rooms were bright and inviting spaces for the children which created an atmosphere that was welcoming and engaging. Areas within the rooms were available and accessible which enabled the children to develop their skills and interests and become independent and confident learners. Materials available included a home area, construction space, small world, tabletop games and puzzles, arts and crafts and a rest area with a library. All equipment and materials in the care rooms were appropriate to the age and development of the children.
- The children had access to an enclosed outdoor area to the side of the premises. The garden was surfaced with soft matting and artificial grass. A climbing frame with a slide, swings, a wooden kitchen with pots and pans, an activity tray with water was available to the children with cups, spoons and sieves.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

#### Basic Needs:

1. Two children in the Baby/Wobbler room were not facilitated by staff to sit at a table for lunch, they were instead fed their meal while sitting on the floor. This is at variance with the service policy on mealtimes and did not create a sociable and inclusive environment for the children.

#### Physical Environment:

2. In the Baby/Wobbler room there were no additional resources such as play crockery and household items located alongside the home area for the children to extend their play and develop their skills.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. In response to the non-compliance the service has stated that training was completed with all staff to reiterate service policy and procedure regarding mealtimes to highlight that all children are to be seated at a table or low chair during all snack and mealtimes. This training occurred at a staff meeting on the 16/10/25 and policy on mealtime practices will be displayed in each care room and will appear on the agenda at each bimonthly staff meeting.

2. To address the non-compliance a wide variety of play crockery and household items have now been purchased and are in the home area. All room resources will be checked monthly by the room leader who will list if any additional resources are required in a copy book. Manager will check monthly and purchase if required.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

1. Agenda of staff meeting conducted on 16/10/25 attached
2. Photos of home corners with additional items attached photo of copy books provided in each room attached.

### **Summary Comment**

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non compliances identified under regulation 19(1)(a) have 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 entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured with digital keypad locks and high-level release buttons to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the early years' service. The outdoor areas were secured with a locked gate, high wall, and fence
- Cleaning agents, blind cords, garden equipment and flexes were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.

#### **Infection Control:**

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and care rooms in the service.
- Soothers were labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Individual storage bags were available for the storage of sheets used by the children during sleep time.
- Mattresses in use in the service were in good condition, and all had washable wipeable covers allowing for easy cleaning.

- Nappy changing was completed as per service policy. Nappy changing facilities were available for the children.
- Staff were familiar with the cleaning and management of mouthed toys.

### Administration of Medication:

- Ten medication administration forms were reviewed and were observed to be completed with the required information and parental signatures.
- No medication was administered during the inspection.

### Safe Sleep:

- Staff maintained ten-minute sleep checks on all sleeping children to include colour, breathing and position. Children were suitably dressed at sleep time with any excess clothing removed.
- The temperature of the care rooms was recorded as between 20.6 and 21.5°C while children slept. This is within the recommended temperature of 18-22°C
- Two children under the age of two years that slept on low contour beds at sleep time had documentation available to demonstrate that the service had engaged with each child's parent and completed an individualised sleeping plan which included the parents written consent.

### Fire Safety:

- Documentation available demonstrated that monthly fire drills were completed in the service. Illuminated fire exits were unobstructed during the inspection and fire procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms inspected.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for five staff employed.

### Infection Control:

2. Staff in the Toddler room were observed drying the hands of 11 children with a cloth towel. This is at variance with the service policy and increases the potential risk of cross infection.

3. It was observed that children from the Montessori 2 care room used the Baby/Wobbler care rooms as a walkway on their return to their care room from the garden. As a result, the 19 children walked on the soft

matting, soft toys and floor coverings that the babies were observed lying and crawling on. This increased the potential risk of cross infection.

**Safe Sleep:**

4. On review of previous sleep records completed by staff it was confirmed that the temperature of the sleep room used by children from Montessori 1 was not recorded to ensure it was maintained between 18-22°C while children slept.

**Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

**Corrective & Preventive Action**

**General Safety:**

1. In response to the non-compliance the service has stated that Garda vetting has been applied for.

**Infection Control:**

2. To address the non-compliance all staff have been reminded of the importance of children using the disposable blue hand towel or the hand dryers for drying hands and not a towel cloth. This was communicated to all staff on the 16/10/25 in a staff meeting. Signs will be placed over sinks in the care rooms with clear instructions on hand washing.

3. Children from other care rooms will no longer walk through the wobbler room after using the back garden. The Montessori classes will use the toddler room if accessible or during sleep times they will walk around the side of the building and in through the front door. New procedure communicated to all staff in staff meeting on 16/10/25 New shoe policy has been drawn up to prevent cross infection in our wobbler room

**Safe Sleep:**

4. All staff reminded of the importance of recording the sleep room temperature in the Montessori sleep room on the sleep checklist in a staff meeting on 16/10/25. Manager to check weekly that room temperatures are recorded on sleep room checklist for Montessori 1

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

1. Updated Garda vetting for four staff members.

**Infection Control:**

2. Agenda of staff meeting on 16/10/25 attached

3. Agenda of staff meeting on 16/10/25 attached along with photo of children using alternative route attached

Shoe Policy attached

### Safe Sleep:

4. Agenda of staff meeting on 16/10/25 attached Photo last week's sleep room checklists completed correctly attached

### Summary Comment

The actions submitted for points 2 – 4 have been reviewed and accepted. The non-compliance identified under point 1 has not been adequately addressed as a copy of the completed Garda vetting has not been submitted for one staff member to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt. The non-compliance in relation to Regulation 23 point 1 remains out outstanding.

## 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 ensure that five staff members were trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) certification and available to the children attending the service.

(a) and (b) First aid boxes were available in the service and suitably equipped and accessible to the adults responsible for caring for the children attending the service

## 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)
- The last recorded fire drills that took place in the service was the 12 September 2025.
- (b)
- The number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was present in the service, the fire extinguishers were serviced on the 27 May 2025 and the smoke alarms on the 22 May 2025.
- (4)
- A notice of the fire procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency were clearly displayed in the care rooms and main receptions of the service.