

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL327
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Name of Service:	Tír na nÓg Huntstown
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Address of Service:	26 Huntstown Lawn, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Veronica Baker
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time
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Date(s) of Inspection:	23/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	9
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell and S. McKenna
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.
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Description of service

Tír na nÓg Childcare and Montessori is a privately owned service operating from a converted two-storey house in Dublin. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional care to children aged 2-6 years old. The children have access to the Explorer room downstairs and the Suncatcher room upstairs. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). There is a kitchen downstairs and sanitary facilities are located on each floor. There is an access to an outdoor area at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and an owner do not work in the service. The registered provider employs nine staff members. All work directly with the children, and the person in charge works in a supernumerary capacity.

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 and premises. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 16 Records in relation to a Preschool Service, Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials, Regulation 22 Food and Drink, Regulation

23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of a child, Regulation 25 First Aid, and Regulation 29 Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations in 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 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

(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.

(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

(1) (a) The registered provider had a designated person in charge of the service, and a there was a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, and review of the staff roster it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) On discussion with staff members and the registered provider, there was a clearly defined person and deputy person in charge to ensure lines of accountability.

(2) The recruitment files of the registered provider, owner and nine staff members were reviewed.

(a)(b) There registered provider had a written reference available for themselves and twenty written and validated references were available for the nine staff members and owner.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for all staff members, owner and the registered provider. However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years following a review of staff members previous employment in the service. This is examined in Regulation 23.

(d) International police vetting was not required for the registered provider or five staff members following a review of documentation available. The police vetting required for four staff members was available.

(4) There was evidence that the nine staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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 adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the inspectors' unannounced arrival, the adult child ratio was observed to be correct and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult-to-child ratios were observed:

- In the Explorers Room there were 2 staff members and 12 children attending the morning session.

Following the conclusion of the morning session there were 2 staff members and 9 children attending on a

part-time and full day care basis. The children were aged between 2 years 9 months old to 4 years 8 months old

- In the Suncatchers Room there were 2 staff members and 12 children attending the morning session, all of whom attended on a part time basis. The children were aged between 2 years 10 months to 4 years old.

(8) (a) Following discussions with staff members and the registered provider and a review of records, the inspector could confirm that two staff members were on the premises at all times when the children were attendance in the service.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (a) A review of documents in the service demonstrated that there was information regarding the details of employees in the service. This included an information sheet about staff members located on the doors to the care rooms.
- (b) –(f) Documents available in the service and on an electronic application provided details of the age profile, ratios, type of care, facilities, opening hours and fees of the service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services.
- (g) The policies, procedures and statements the service were available in the service and on the service’s electronic application in accordance with Regulation 10.
- (h) The inspectors observed that the attendance records, on their arrival to each room, was reflective of the children in attendance. The preventive actions following the last inspection had been maintained.
- (i) A staff roster, which was updated as required, was available.
- (j) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept in respect of medication administered within the service. A total sample of 14 forms were reviewed, which included children in attendance across both rooms. These forms included appropriate information to support safe care practices.
- (k) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept in respect of accidents and incidents within the service. A total sample of seven forms were reviewed and included appropriate information to support safe care practices.

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*
 - (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.*

Compliance Information

Supporting relationships around children

The interactions between the staff and children were kind and caring, with gentle words of encouragement and soft tones observed to be used throughout the day. The inspector observed children settling in at the start of a

new school year with mixed age groups in both rooms. Staff members described how this helped the children's integration, especially when new. Children were observed to be happy and relaxed in the rooms. Throughout the inspection children were observed making choices about the activities they took part in as activities and materials were easily accessible. All children were observed taking part in outdoor play. At this time there were a variety of activities available, staff and children were observed making 'soup' with water and flower petals and children's imagination was encouraged through the language used about the activity.

Basic Needs

Water was accessible to the children within their rooms. Children were provided with meals from the service and staff members sat with children whilst they ate and chatted with them about their interests and families. Children were observed to use the toilet independently with staff remaining close by for support if required.

Non-Compliance Information

The inspector observed that children were not always provided with appropriate play and development opportunities. The staff members advised the inspector that the snack was due at 11.am. The staff members settled the children for snack at 10.58am and the snack arrived at 11.14am. Following a delay in the serving of the children's snack some children were observed becoming restless and walked around the room to different play areas. The inspector observed staff members gently and repeatedly asking children to return to their seats. Children's learning and development was not facilitated during this transition period, where for 16 minutes the children were required to sit at the tables and wait for their snack with no play or learning opportunities provided.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that this was an unusual delay and staff have been advised if a delay occurs at any mealtime, staff will engage children in a quiet activity, for example story time, singing, or circle time where children are encouraged to tell share their stories, experiences and interests.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider in their corrective and preventive action plan has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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 children had toys and equipment that was readily accessible on low level shelving in labelled boxes. There were clearly defined areas such as a home corner and construction area. These separate areas contained dolls houses, kitchens, tool benches, play bricks and the supportive equipment was readily available. In these areas there were also real-life materials, such as kettles and phones, to support children’s play. Sensory materials, such as natural objects were also available and proved popular choices of play by the children on the day. Children could access arts and crafts materials as they required.

There was a cosy area in each room with soft seating and cushions for the children to relax as required. There were low level tables and chairs and there was enough to allow each child to play and eat at the table as required.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider purchased meals from an outside catering company. A four-week menu was available and on display in the entrance to the service. The children were provided with meals as stated on the menu on the day of inspection. This included breakfast of toast and cereal, a morning snack of chicken goujons and vegetables, chicken pasta bake for dinner and sandwiches. The children were also provided with daily snacks which included fruit and vegetables. The staff members spoken with were aware of dietary requirements, alternatives were provided, and extra portions were also available if required. The children were able to access their water independently throughout the day.

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 preventive actions following the last inspection were in place as there were no hazardous liquids stored in the low cupboards in the hallway. These were stored in high cupboards which were inaccessible to the children.
- There were no unsecure shelves in the rooms, demonstrating the preventive action for the last inspection had been maintained.
- Following the previous inspection the preventive actions were maintained as items were securely placed to avoid a risk of injury from large items falling.

Infection Control:

- Effective handwashing practises were observed after children used the toilet and when they came in from outdoor play.
- Pedal bins were in operation and in good working order.
- The soft seating in each room was maintained and could be effectively cleaned.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years as there was no updated Garda Vetting disclosure for the owner of the service.
2. The blind cord on the back window in the upstairs care room was unsecured and posed an injury risk to a child. It is acknowledged when brought to the attention of the person in charge this was then secured out of reach.

Infection Control:

3. A risk of cross contamination was observed in the outdoor area. The children from Sun Catchers room were observed to have a fruit snack in the outdoor area at approximately midday. No handwashing was observed before children were given fruit which they ate with their hands. This poses an infection control risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that they have a very precise Garda vetting procedure and now that there is clarity on the owner's requirement this will be obtained.
2. The blind cord was secured, and the manager will complete checks.

Infection Control:

3. The staff were retrained in hand washing requirements, and this is ongoing.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photograph of secured cord

Infection Control:

Staff training and staff signed staff attendance.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider in their corrective and preventive action plan has addressed the non-compliance in relation to the blind cord and the handwashing.

As a renewed Garda Vetting disclosure was not submitted to the Inspector, this non-compliance remains outstanding and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 ensured that a person trained in a First Aid Responder (FAR) course was available. There were three staff members with FAR and other staff members had paediatric first aid.
- (2) (a) (b) The first aid equipment was available in the kitchen which was conspicuous and easily accessible to staff members. The first aid equipment available provided adequate resources in the event of a first aid emergency.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

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

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(b) The service had a secure entrance to the service with a buzzer system in place. This prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children.

(c) Heating was observed to be appropriate throughout the service. Lights were appropriately covered, and blinds were available to dim lighting if required.

(e) The service was equipped with adequate sanitary facilities. There was a downstairs toilet and handwash basin. Upstairs there was a nappy changing unit, two toilets and two handwash basins. This is sufficient for the maximum capacity the service is registered for.

Non-Compliance Information

(c) No active ventilation was observed in the downstairs toilet. During the inspection a malodour was noted in this toilet. This practice was found to be non-compliant on previous inspection on 16 May 2023. The corrective actions submitted following those inspections failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

(d) The registered provider did not ensure the service was effectively cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required. This was observed by the following.

- Communal areas, such as the staircase and lobby area were not effectively cleaned with areas of dust observed. Whilst there were daily cleaning schedules available for the care rooms these were not available for the communal areas, and this was confirmed by staff members.
- There were dark stains in the floor rail of the toilet partition in the children's upstairs toilets. This staining resembled mould.
- Painted skirting boards next to a rocking chair had begun to chip and flake.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) The registered provider submitted a quote for the work.

(d) The registered provider submitted evidence of cleaning schedules for the communal areas and the maintenance of the toilet partition and the re painted skirting boards.

Supporting documentation submitted

Cleaning schedules

Builder's quote

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider in their corrective and preventive action plan has addressed the non-compliance in relation to maintenance of the service.

As the work on the sanitary accommodation to repair the ventilation system, this non-compliance remains outstanding and will be reviewed at the next inspection.