

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY062
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Name of Service:	Children's Language Development Project
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Address of Service:	Garrai Glas, Tuam Road, Athenry, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H65 PW95
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sonia Woods
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	17/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	18
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulations Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
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

This service was first opened in September 2008 as a voluntary full day care service. The service is purpose built and is in the town of Athenry in a private residential area of the town. The service operates a sessional, part-time and full day care service for children aged from 2 years to 6 years. The service operates from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm, Monday to Friday. The service caters for children that are neurodiverse or have been diagnosed with down syndrome. The services focus is to develop individualised educational programmes to support children’s language, communication and learning to prepare them for integration into mainstream education settings. The service works in conjunction with a multi-disciplinary supports which include the early intervention team, a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and behaviour specialist. The service has 3 playrooms, sensory room, sanitary facilities, kitchen, staff room and an office. There is also an outdoor play area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The service currently employs 12 adults which includes the service manager. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 and safety.

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 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 ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person available to deputise.

(b) The roster indicated that both the designated person in charge and deputy was on the premises while the pre-school children were present.

(c) The management structure was displayed in the hallway and adults were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

All 13 adult's files including the registered provider were reviewed:

(2)(a) There were 16 of the required 26 validated references from previous employers.

(b) There were 10 validated references were from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for all 13 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting time frames as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(4) There was evidence that 12 of the adults had attained at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework for qualifications or a qualification deemed to be equivalent. The registered provider did not require a qualification as they don't work in the service with children.

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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the day of inspection.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to.
There were 12 adults working directly with 17 children in the morning and afternoon and 12 adults working directly with 18 preschool children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) Documentary evidence on the roster indicated that at least 2 adults were on the premises when the pre-school was operating.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(15)(1)(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) and (i).

A sample of 6 children's records were reviewed by the Early Years Inspectors.

The entries reviewed were factual, consistent and accurate.

The 6 sampled records of children contained the following:

- The name and date of birth of the child.
- The date on which the child first attended the service.
- The date on which the child stopped attending the service (where relevant).
- The name and address of the child's parent or guardian, and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
- Written authorisation and permissions for collecting the child.
- Details are recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
- The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
- A record of any immunisations the child has had.
- Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical

(4) The registered provider advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that all relevant children's records were kept for 2 years.

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

19(1)(b)

BASIC NEEDS

- Children snacks and main meal of the day was supplied by the parents in line with the healthy eating policy of the service.
- Each preschool child has thier own individual food plan in line with thier educational care programme.
- At snack time the adults sat with the children and engaged with them in a respectful caring way.
- Age-appropriate crockery and plates were available for preschool children to use.
- Water was readily available in the playrooms for children to use throughout the day.
- Self toileting programmes were developed for children and this was handled in a positive and sensitive manner by adults.
- Adults were observed to be responsive to the children's cues for e.g at toileting, completing tasks, mealtimes and asisting with social integration with other children.
- Children were observed washing their hands at appropriate times and were encouraed and supported by adults.
- Children had the opportunity to relax in cosy corners in the playrooms and any child that required sleep, stackable beds were provided by the service.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner in line with each childs individual education care plans, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement, encouragement and praise.

Programme of Activities

- Each child had an 'Individual Education Plan' (IEP) and personal outcomes goals. Goals are drawn up based on a child's present abilities- with parents, the team in the service and the multi-disciplinary team.
- A wide variety of programmes were used within the service, depending on each child's individual needs and the profile of children attending each group or individual session.
- Some of the programmes used included the following: TEACCH (Autism Programme); Hanen Communication; Lámh (the manual sign system); Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS);

Derbyshire Language; Montessori; Play, Motor, Sensory and Music Programmes, Social-Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support (SCERTS) and Developmental Therapy. Other programme areas covered include cognitive skills, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, language and communication skills, social skills, play skills, interpersonal and personal skills and self-help skills.

- Families had opportunities to meet with the adults directly working with each child and the multidisciplinary team.
- Assessments and observations were carried out daily by adults to inform future program planning for each child.
- The theme in the service was ‘Summer Time’ and for those moving on to primary school ‘Transition’.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider responded to say:

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for 13 adults, however 3 of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous 3 years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice ‘EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting’ posing a potential risk for children

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The outstanding garda vetting has been renewed and in future the manager will ensure it is renewed every 3 years.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

The garda vetting for the 3 adults was submitted to the Early Years Inspector.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was reviewed by the inspector and has been deemed to have met the requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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) In date certificates were on file to evidence that 4 adults were trained as First Aid Responders (FAR); the adult roster indicated that an adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) was available during the opening hours of the service.
- (2)(a) (b) The fully equipped first aid box was available while the pre-school children were present, were stored within easy reach of the adults in the kitchen.

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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(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) Written records of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service were available. The last date recorded was the 15 May 2025.
- (b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The

firefighting certificate was dated October 2024 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 05 June 2025.

(2)(c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were available on the premises for review by the inspector.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency were positioned on the walls of the play rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The service had an in-date insurance certificate for 30 preschool children on a full day care basis valid until the 27 March 2026.