

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015GY136

Name of Service: Little Blossoms Childcare Centre

Address of Service: Camp Street, Oughterard, Co. Galway

Eircode: H91RX64

Name of Registered Provider: Jennifer Geoghegan Tierney

Service type: Full Day Care

Date of Inspection: 05/03/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla - Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A- (1st Floor-Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Nic Dhonnacha
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 private pre-school is registered as a full day care service. Currently no child attends full day care hours. The service offers a sessional programme and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care from 9.00hrs to 12.30hrs, from Monday to Friday. The children are aged 2 years 10 months to 5 years of age. Additionally, the service offers a school age programme from 13.30hrs to 17.30hrs for school aged children.

The pre-school service is in the village of Oughterard, Co Galway. There were three playrooms namely the junior pre-school playroom on the ground floor and the senior preschool (Montessori) playroom and the wobbler/toddler playroom on the first floor. The designated sleep room has been converted to a school age children's playroom, adjacent to the junior pre-school playroom. The children have access to a secure outdoor play area to the rear of the premises for children's play activities, exploration, and learning activities. The service offers a child centred, play based curriculum focusing on the children's emerging interests with an element of Montessori included.

Staffing

On the day of inspection there were five adults on the premises including the registered provider. The registered provider works directly with the preschool children daily. The registered provider is the named person in charge, there is a named designated deputy and two childcare workers. Additionally, there is an auxiliary/cleaner staff member who works during the operation hours of the service but does not work directly with the preschool children. A total of four adults work directly with the children this includes the registered provider, and they hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. The adult staff have documentary evidence of on-going training and education.

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 Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 Staffing Levels

Regulation 16 Record in Relation to Pre School Service

Regulation 19 Health Welfare and Development of Child

Regulation 25 First Aid

Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures

Regulation 28 Insurance

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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.

Additional Information

On the 5th of March 2025 an Immediate Action Notice was issued under Regulation 23: General Safety. The hot water in both wash hand basins in the designated nappy changing area was reading in excess of 60 °C.

On the 5th of March 2025 a response to the Immediate Action Notice was received from the registered provider outlining the corrective actions taken.

On the 21st of March 2025 the registered provider advised that the works were complete, and the water was thermostatically controlled in the designated nappy changing area.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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*

(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 was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b)

The registered provider was the person in charge and was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.

The registered provider, deputy person in charge, two childcare workers and an auxiliary staff members file were reviewed.

(2)(a) Eight of the 10 required written validated references required were from a past employer

(b) Two of the 10 required written validated references were from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the five staff.

(d) Not applicable, as documentary evidence showed that no staff had lived outside the jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months while over the age of 18 years and therefore did not require police vetting.

(4) Four staff members working directly with the children had evidence of a childcare qualification to at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework 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) The attendance records for the previous three weeks were reviewed by the early years' inspector, indicating that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the pre-school children.

(2) There were 4 staff working directly with and caring for 26 children who attended sessional care hours, that included the registered provider.

Additionally, there was a staff member who carried out auxiliary duties.

All the children were aged between 2 years 10 months and 5 years of age.

At all times during the period of inspection, the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained.

(8)(c) Following review of the staff roster it was noted that two staff members were on the premises during the operation hours of the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

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;

Compliance Information

(h) Details of children’s attendance was accurately recorded in a child attendance record book.

(i) A staff roster was available which demonstrated how breaks were covered and what hours and days the staff were working.

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:

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service. The food observed was healthy and nutritious.
- The snacks provided by parents and guardians consisted of a selection of sandwiches, brown bread, cheese, ham, rice cakes, yogurts, wraps, crackers, bread sticks, and pieces of fruit. The staff and children sat together at snack time.
- There was a designated area for the children’s water bottles and sippy cups in each playroom for children to self-serve and access their drinks throughout the session.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence.
- All the children in the senior Montessori room and junior preschool were toilet trained and either toileted independently or with some assistance as required. The dignity of children using the toilet was preserved.

- The staff maintained the dignity and privacy of the children requiring a nappy change from the toddler room.
- The staff supervised children's hand washing before snack time, after toileting, after nappy changing, after blowing their noses, after outdoor play and prior to going home.
- Children had plenty of opportunities for moving about freely, exploring their environment, and improving their emerging skills such as coordination and balance.
- All the children had the opportunity to play outside daily. The children had appropriate dress wear for the outdoors- hats, coats and rain gear.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The registered provider advised the inspector that ongoing efforts to ensure partnership and exchange of information with parents and guardians was continued throughout the year.
- A key person system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The key persons role included liaising with parents and guardians.
- On speaking with staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's activities, what they ate, if they were tired, any toileting issues and play activities engaged in.
- The service used a social media messaging application. There was evidence that activities the children participated in were shared with parents and guardians.
- Additionally, classroom learning journals showed photographs of children involved in activities, the themes the children engaged in and staff observations.
- Each child had an individual scrapbook/journal and copy books showing their individual art and craft work and drawings and writings.
- There was evidence of short, medium, and long-term curriculum planning. The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children's choices. Children were supported by the staff during periods of individual and group-based activities, the staff sensitively supervised and intervened when necessary. The themes of the week included springtime and farm animals.
- The staff were observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children. During observed interactions, the staff demonstrated that they knew the children well, recognising and valuing their individual interests, needs and learning. The staff were observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them, and responded to their requests. The staff interacted in a positive way with

the children e.g., they sat at the children's level, maintained good eye contact, showed empathy and a good understanding of each child.

- Staff were observed helping children find solutions, supporting them and talking to children in a variety of ways- discussing, questioning, extending a child's activities, initiating games and activities.
- In the playrooms, the children engaged in free play, story time, tabletop activities and painting farm animals. The children were observed at construction, sorting shapes and colours, painting, stacking materials, playing with tracks, stations and playing shop with real world items.
- The children chatted to the inspector about their day and talked about their families, likes and interests.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The layout of each playroom allowed the staff to supervise the children as they moved into the different interest areas. The rooms were bright and colourful.
- The equipment was stored on low-level shelving and was readily accessible by the pre-school children. The play equipment and materials were age and stage appropriate.
- Suitably sized tables and chairs were provided in the playrooms for the pre-school children.
- The resources were organised and easily accessible to each pre-school child.
- Soft seating, cushions, activity floor mats and soft wipeable mats were available for children to rest, relax and take a break if required. It was acknowledged by the registered provider that these rest areas will be developed further during the year. The registered provider had new floor beds with appropriate bed linen if a child under two years of age required a rest or sleep during the operation of the sessional hours. No child under two years of age was attending the service on the day of inspection.

OUTDOOR PLAY AREA:

- There was a combination of artificial grass, square slabs, tarmacadam and concrete path surfaces in the outdoor play areas.
- The area was secure with wooden fencing and secure gates. The play area was divided into three sections with a variety of different play equipment and materials for each area.
- Items included a wooden playhouse, an activity centre, slides, a climbing unit, rocking toys, a mud kitchen, a planting area, balance beams, pedal controlled cars, a basketball ring, balls and flower shaped chalk boards mounted to the fencing.
- There was additional play items in a secure storage shed in the outdoor play area which staff advised were rotated on a theme and seasonal basis.

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 main entrance door into the pre-school was secure to prevent access by an unauthorised person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play area was to the rear of the premises and was secured so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area.
- In the playrooms, cleaning agents were inaccessible and stored out of children's reach.
- The kitchen had a method of security and was thereby inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- There were no leads or flexes accessible to the children posing a strangulation or trip hazard.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- The room temperature of the playrooms was recorded and maintained between 18 -22 °C.
- Outside the junior preschool room there was a rail unit for the children's coats and belongings in the hallway; thereby preventing a trip hazard.
- Daily records of attendance were kept for all the children attending each playroom.

INFECTION CONTROL:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with warm water, liquid soap, and disposable paper hand towels.
- During the inspection, the children were assisted and encouraged to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after using a tissue, and prior to going home.
- There was evidence of a daily cleaning schedule and cleaning practices that detailed the cleaning and sterilising of toys, furniture, fixtures, fittings and soft furnishings.
- There was a designated nappy changing area with a wash hand basin, foot pedalled lidded bin and an airtight sealable bin for the storage of nappies.
- There was a fridge in the kitchen for the storage of perishable items from the children's lunch boxes and bags.

- The playroom was adequately ventilated with windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperature at the required level.
- The sanitary vents were maintained in a clean condition.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety

1. Water temperature recordings of 55°C to 61.8°C, were taken between 10.33hrs and 13.00hrs, from the hot water tap at the two wash hand basins used by children having their nappy changed from the Toddler room. These water temperatures were above the recommended 43°C upper safety limit posing a risk of scalding a preschool child.

It was acknowledged that once advised the registered provider contacted and organised a professional to investigate and rectify this hot water temperature. It was also noted that the hot water temperatures from all the other hot taps in sanitary areas and playrooms were under 43°C.

Infection Control

2. The nappy changing mat in the designated nappy changing area was worn and torn. This posed a potential risk of cross infection to the preschool children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On 5/3/2025, 11/03/2025, 21/03/2025 and 4/4/2025 the registered provider advised of the following

Corrective and Preventive Action

General Safety

1. The water temperature was regulated by a competent person on the 10/03/2025. The hot water in the nappy changing area sinks will be monitored regularly with a temperature checking device and records maintained.

Infection Control

2. Two new changing mats were purchased immediately following inspection. A spare mat will be kept in storage and staff have been advised to report any area of the changing mat that is worn or torn in the future and a replacement mat will be issued.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety

1. On the 5/3/2025 the registered provider submitted photographs of the thermostatic controlled valve that was ordered from a supply shop. On the 21/3/2025 the registered provider submitted photographs of the new thermostatically controlled water system that has been installed to regulate the water temperature in the designated nappy changing area.

Infection Control

2. On the 11/03/2025 the registered provider submitted photographs of two new changing mats for the designated nappy changing area.

Summary Comment

- The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 point 1 & 2 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 two staff members were trained in first aid for children and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a)
There was a first aid box, safely stored, easily accessible and in a conspicuous position in the kitchen.

(b)
The service demonstrated that the first aid bag was fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service and items were within date.

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 in writing was kept and maintained in the service of the monthly fire drills. The last monthly fire drill was dated 12/02/2025.

(b)

A record was maintained of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment with the last annual service dated 18/06/2025.

The annual maintenance for the services smoke and fire detection system was dated 15/04/2024.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the pre-school rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available for a sessional and afterschool service to a maximum of 34 children with an expiry date of 27/03/2025.