

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY221
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Name of Service:	SALI Childcare Service Ltd
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Address of Service:	Mercy Primary School, St. Francis Street, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 RX32
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Name of Registered Provider:	Myles McHugh
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	03/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	7	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	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

The premises is in the centre of Galway city. This preschool service operates from the ground floor of a primary school, with 3 childcare playrooms namely the ‘Inventor’s Preschool room 1’ and the ‘Explorer’s Preschool room 2’, in the main building, with the ‘Discoverer’s Preschool room 3’ located in an extension to the side of the main building. The service offers a full day-care, part-time care service, an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme (9.30hrs to 12.30hrs) and sessional care programme. Additionally, a breakfast club, happy hour and afterschool programme is provided for school-aged children. The preschool caters for a maximum of 57 children at any one time, from Monday to Friday between 8:00hrs and 18.00hrs, for children aged between 2 years and 6 months and 6 years. The Inventors playroom was the only playroom in use for the preschool children on the day of inspection. Quiet rest areas were available in each of the playrooms for children to rest and relax or opt out of an activity if he/she chooses to. Stackable beds were available to facilitate children requiring sleep provision. There is a designated kitchen where the meals and snacks for children are stored, prepared and reheated on site. The service has a designated cook. There are 2 secure outdoor sheltered play areas, located to the rear and side of the building, for play activities. The children also have access to an indoor sports hall. A play based preschool curriculum focusing on play and emerging interests is provided

Staffing

The registered provider is not working in the service on a daily basis. There is a person in charge and a named person who is available to deputise when necessary. There are 12 adults in total working in the premises, with 10 adults working directly with the children holding at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. Additionally, there is a designated cook. The adults 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.

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. 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.

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 is supernumerary in the service and there was a designated manager/person in charge and a named person in charge to deputise as required.
 - (b) The named manager/person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of the unannounced inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in the service identifying the lines of authority and accountability in the service. The staff demonstrated awareness of their specific roles and responsibilities during discussions with the inspector.

(2)

Twelve staff files reviewed- the registered provider, manager/person in charge, cook, 4 staff who work directly with the preschool children and 5 staff who provide direct care for the school age children on afterschool programmes and summer camps.

- (a) Twenty-one written validated references from past employers were reviewed.
- (b) Three written validated references from a source other than a past employer were reviewed.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 12 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Vetting documents showed that international police vetting was available for 5 adults who lived and worked for greater than 6 months in another state while over the age of 18 years.

(4)

Ten adults working directly with children attending the service hold at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to Level 8 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)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) On the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service there were 3 adults working directly with 7 children in the service. Additionally, the designated person in charge also provided direct care to children during the day. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the day of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service. The Inventors playroom there were 7 preschool children aged between 3 years and 5 years of age and 3 adults in the playroom. Additionally, the person in charge provided direct care and relief if necessary and helped with the administration part of the inspection.

(8)(a) There were more than 2 adults always present during the unannounced inspection. The attendance records reviewed showed that at least 2 adults were always present in the service during opening hours.

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:

- The service promoted healthy eating in line with the service's health eating policy. The inspector observed that a 3-week menu plan was available in the kitchen area. Meals and snacks were provided by the preschool service and an onsite cook; these were noted to be served at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Staff in the Inventors playroom stated the children had a choice of cereals and toast for breakfast in the morning. The children's mid-morning snack provided by the preschool and parents and guardians was served between 10:00 and 10:30, consisted of a variety of bite sized pieces of fruit, pancakes, crackers and cheese.

- Lunches were served at approx. 13:00 in the Inventors room which consisted of cottage pie, broccoli and yorkshire puddings. The staff advised that 2 further snacks were served at 15:00 and 16:30 for children availing of full day care with a selection of crackers, cheese, fruit and toast.
- Alternative food was available for children who had specific dietary requirements or did not like the food on offer. In addition, a child in the Inventors playroom who expressed hunger was observed being given more food by a staff member.
- Water was available in the playroom and in the outside play area from individually labelled water bottles.
- Age and stage appropriate cutlery were observed with children having access to bowls, plates and spoons.
- The preschool children were observed accessing the sanitary area independently. Staff were available to help as required.
- One child wore a nappy. The staff changed the child as necessary in the designated nappy changing area.
- The children played both indoors and outdoors on the day of inspection. The staff informed the inspector the children play outdoors daily.

Supporting children's relationships:

- During meals and tabletop activities staff in the playroom were observed sitting with the children engaging in social conversation, listening to their questions and comments and responding appropriately.
- Staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. Examples included staff interacting with the children while they relaxed and had a spa session, the children were observed with cool water rinsed individual facial cloths on their faces and rose petals while relaxing music was playing in the background.
- A staff member supported children to engage positively with each other. The children were observed to play with sand and sensory play. The staff advised the children to share and not to throw the sand, to make moulds and shapes and to feel the texture of the sand in the basin. At another station in the playroom the children and staff made moulded handprints from sand gloves and took turns painting them. The children and staff were given the opportunity to take turns with a microphone and shine- they were observed discussing topics of their choice.
- The children and staff were observed playing together in the outdoor play area, they spent time searching for bugs and insects, kicking ball, pushing wheelbarrows, climbing on the slides and the activity centre and pedalling tricycles.

- Communication with parents and guardians was observed to be mainly through private messaging service. The inspector noted that messages were sent on a daily and weekly schedule. In addition, staff also stated that they communicate with parents/guardians over the phone, by email or at drop off and collection times and at scheduled meeting times if required.
- Each child had an individual scrapbook with artwork, themes, observations and pictures of various activities the children engaged in throughout the year. These scrapbooks are presented to the parents and guardians at the end of each school year at graduation.

Physical and material environment:

- There were a variety of suitable materials and equipment available in the Inventors playroom which provided opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas. The playroom had clearly defined areas including arts and crafts, construction, home corner and puzzles, a self-care station, observation station, a computer station, role play area and a nature area to name but a few.
- Equipment in the room was presented on low-level shelving in boxes making the materials and resources easily accessible to the children while offering choice and promoting independence.
- The walls of the playroom were decorated with a variety of materials which helped to promote a sense of identity and belonging for the children in the room. Examples included themed artwork, photographs of the children with their families, the children involved in activities and of the places of importance in the children's local community for example Wolfe tone bridge, the Spanish Arch and the Claddagh Quay.

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 appropriately secured with a system to monitor people's entry and exit to the service. The internal and external entry and exit points prevented children exiting or unauthorised persons accessing the service. Unauthorised persons were signed in, in the visitor's book at the front entrance lobby.
- The outdoor area was secured with a concrete wall, fencing and gates.

- The children were supervised at all times during the inspection and their arrival and departure to the service was recorded on the service's electronic recording system.
- The play materials and equipment throughout the service were maintained in good condition.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- The sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined and pedal operated bins.
- A designated nappy changing area was available, with a clean intact changing mat, aprons and gloves for use by adults, an airtight foot pedalled bin for waste. There was an updated nappy changing policy.
- Both the children and the adults washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, toileting and before mealtime.
- The children's personal care items were labelled and stored individually.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was given on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The Inventors playroom was converted and made conducive for rest and sleep after dinner. Low level beds and mattresses were available for children to sleep in the care room. Areas for the children to relax were available in each room with soft furnishings and cushions.
- Upon discussion, staff demonstrated a good knowledge of the service's safe sleep policy. The children's sleep observations were recorded by staff every 10 minutes. These observations included the children's colour, position and breathing.
- The playroom temperature was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperatures were maintained between 18°C to 22°C. The age range of the children having a rest and sleep was between 3 years and 5 years of age.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit doors and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exit routes and fire assembly points were readily identified with clear signage.

Outing:

- An outing was not undertaken during the inspection. A service policy was available to inform practice.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- One of two concrete pillars in the outdoor play area had no protective padding in place to reduce the risk of injury or harm to the preschool children. It was acknowledged by the person in charge that it would be rectified as soon as possible

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 4/07/2025 and 23/9/2025 the person in charge advised of the following

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The pillar in the outdoor play area was covered with padding the day after the inspection. The person in charge advised that the pillars have been added to the daily outdoor risk assessment checklist and remedial actions will be taken to rectify potential risks as soon as possible going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- A photograph of a blue coloured safety padding applied to the concrete pillar in the outdoor play area.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 General Safety point 1 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)
Five adults working on the premises have undertaken First Aid Responder (FAR) first aid training and were available to the pre-school children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a)
A suitable equipped first aid cabinet and first aid box were stored in readily identifiable areas in each care room and were available to the pre-school children attending the service.
- (b)
First aid supplies were available in each room for use in the event of an emergency.

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)
Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 2nd of June 2025.
- (b)
A record of the number, type and maintenance for the firefighting equipment maintenance service took place on the 2nd of August 2024.
The most recent smoke alarm system maintenance service took place on the 15th of April 2025.
- (4)
Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance cover was available for 100 pre-school children. The policy was valid until the 27th of March 2026.