

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY234
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Name of Service:	Socrates Learning Ltd t/a Spraoi Early Learning Centre
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Address of Service:	Bealach Na Gaoithe, Galway Road, Tuam, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H54 CD51
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Name of Registered Provider:	Theresa Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	53	PM	53
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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.
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan and F. Kelly.
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors.
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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 full day care service is in a residential area, in the town of Tuam, Co Galway. The service offers a full day care programme from 08.00 to 18.00 from Monday to Friday, which caters for children aged between 0 and 6 years of age. The service also offers a part time and an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) preschool care programme and a sessional care programme from 09.00 to 12.00. There are six playrooms which include The Owls, The Chicks, The Monkeys, The Bumble Bees, The Tigers and The Butterflies. Rest areas are provided in each of the playrooms to facilitate children to rest or relax during the day. The service also has a designated sleep room beside the Chicks playroom. There is a kitchen where the main meals for children are prepared. There is a secured outdoor play area located at the rear of the service for children to play.

Staffing

There were 16 adults employed in the service including the registered provider, area manager, manager and cook. The registered provider does not work directly with children.

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

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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

23/02/2026

An immediate action notice was issued to the service. On the day of inspection, there was not a person trained in First Aid Responder when the inspectors arrived on the premises.

24/02/26

The registered provider submitted a response outlining an action plan to ensure that there were enough staff appropriately trained in first aid available to the children while they attended the service.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the area manager, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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.*

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 service manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the service manager and the area manager were on the premises and facilitated the inspection.
- (2) Following a review of the service files and discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that there were 16 members of staff employed in the service, which included the registered provider that did not work on the premises daily. The 16 staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

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- (a) Of the required 32 references, there were 21 written and appropriately validated references available from a recent employer.
- (b) Of the required 32 references, there were 7 written and appropriately validated reference available from a source other than recent employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the staff working in the service. The service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) A police vetting disclosure was available for nine adults working in the service that had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over six months.
- (4) The 14 adults who were working directly with the children had evidence of an award in Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or qualifications deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(a) There were two adults working in the service that had only one written and appropriately validated reference available from their most recent employer, when two validated references were required.
- (b) There was one adult working in the service that did not have two written validated references on file.
- (d) There was one adult that had a history of employment on file, however there were periods of time where it was difficult to ascertain where and for how long this person lived in another jurisdiction.
- (3) The correct vetting procedures specified in paragraph (2) were not carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider responded to say:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)(a)(b) Written references and validations were immediately obtained for the 3 adults mentioned in non-compliance.
- (d) An updated CV was provided for one adult member mentioned in non-compliance which specifies the amount of time this person lived outside of the jurisdiction.
- (3) Correct vetting procedures were reviewed for the staff members in question.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)(a)(b) Written validated references for the 3 adults was submitted.
- (d) Documented evidence of a curriculum vitae was submitted for 1 adult.

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- (d) An up-to-date curriculum vitae for one adult was submitted. Evidence of a new process for reviewing gaps in a curriculum vitae has been put in place prior to employment and submitted.
- (3) All vetting procedures will be carried out in the future prior to any adult working directly with children.

Summary Comment

(2)(a)(b)(d) & (3)

The actions taken and the documentation submitted has been reviewed by the early Years Inspector and has been deemed to have met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the inspection day.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to. There were 10 adults working directly with 53 children in the morning and in the afternoon.

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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:

19 (1)(a)

- The service had a healthy eating policy and a 3-week menu plan.
- The parents provided the morning snack which consisted of sandwiches, fruit, crackers and cheese. The hot meal of the day was tomato pasta with vegetables.
- Crockery and plates were provided for children at snack and mealtimes.
- Water was readily available for children in each of the playrooms and each of their water containers were labelled with their name.
- Children who were toilet trained used the toilet independently and were supported by adults if required throughout the day.
- Children were observed at table top activities, mealtimes, playing in the clearly defined interest areas and in the outdoor play area.
- The theme of the week was 'Spraoi' and children were observed playing with farm animals and painting their hedgehogs.

Supporting Relationships

- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by adults. Children were shown positive strategies to manage their behaviour during the day by adults.
- Communication with parents was via the multi media application and at drop off and collection time.
- Adults were observed to be caring in their interactions with children

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Non-Compliance Information

(19)(1)(a)

Physical & Material Environment

The issue outline below could negatively affect the learning and development opportunities available to the children:

1. Although there were musical toys in the Bumble Bee and Tigers playrooms these did not work as the batteries were not replaced in them.
2. Although there were baskets for sensory/treasure they were not equipped.
3. The household area in the playrooms was poorly equipped with natural materials and required development.
4. In the Monkey playroom jigsaws were stored in clear boxes with no pictorial representation.
5. The Bumblebee playroom did not have a suitable chair for comforting a child.
6. The mud kitchen in the outdoor play area had no utensils for children to play with.
7. There was a blue sofa in the Monkeys playroom which was in a poor state of repair.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in their response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Physical & Material Environment

Further training is being developed and rolled out to support room leaders and practitioners in creating invitations to play and to support managers in identifying areas that need development.

1. The batteries have been replaced in the toys in the bumblebee room.
2. Sensory/Treasure baskets have been fully restocked in the playrooms.
3. Household areas have been further developed with natural materials.
4. Pictorial representation has been added to the clear jigsaw boxes making them easily identifiable for children.
5. A comfort chair has been purchased and added to the Bumblebee playroom.
6. The mud kitchen has been further developed with more utensils and structured invitations to play.
7. The blue sofa in the Monkeys playroom has been replaced with a new sofa.

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Supporting documentation submitted

(19(1)(a) 1-7 Documented and photographic evidence was submitted by the registered provider to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

(19(1)(a) 1-7 The statements and photographic evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and has been deemed to have met the Regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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

Infection Control:

- The three designated nappy changing units with clean intact changing mats had a leak proof self-sealing pedal bin for the disposal of nappies.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled. The children's barrier creams were clearly individually labelled within their designated nappy changing area.
- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towel were available for effective hand washing.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.

Safe Sleep:

- Younger children were observed sleeping on demand throughout the day.
- After lunch children were observed sleeping in the playrooms on stackable and sleep beds.
- There was a designated sleep room with cots for sleep provision for children younger than 2 years of age.
- Children under 2 years of age were observed sleeping on demand, in their individual age-appropriate grow bag.
- Children over 15 months, of whom there were 5 in total, were observed sleeping on sleep beds. Each individual child had a sleep plan drawn up in conjunction with the parents.

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- There was a safe sleep policy that detailed temperature, lighting, ventilation, space between cots and child safety requirements as per the 'safe sleep for under 2's best practice guidelines for childcare services policy'.
- Documented records were available of each child's sleep, recording the time an adult physically checks a child and the signature. Additionally, the records included a sleeping child's colour, position, breathing and the temperature of the sleep room with the opportunity to document any necessary remedial actions taken.
- The inspectors observed and documentary evidence indicated that the adults physically checked sleeping children every 10 minutes.
- A supply of dry, clean linen was available and stored in a containers.
- Rest and quiet areas were provided in each of the playrooms to facilitate a child to rest or relax during the day.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

The following may pose as a risk of cross infection for a preschool child:

1. The correct procedure was not observed at nappy changing. One out of the three adults did not wash the children's hands or their own prior to and after nappy changing. There was a designated sink available in the nappy changing area.
2. One of the two sinks in the nappy changing area opposite the Bumble Bee playroom was unclean.
3. The outdoor play area and equipment was unclean and there was stagnant water in an activity table.
4. The toilets in the sanitary area in Butterflies room were stained and required cleaning.
5. In the Butterflies room, the mechanical air vents were dusty and there was mildew / dampness above the window in the children's sanitary area.
6. A young child attending the butterfly playroom, returned to the playroom after using the toilet without washing his hands. This was brought to the attention of the staff by the inspectorate team.

Fire Safety:

7. The service did not conduct monthly fire drills, which may result in delayed evacuation times and hinder the ability of both staff and children to evacuate safely and quickly in the event of an emergency.

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8. The fire alarm in the sanitary area attached to the Butterfly room was beeping every 2 minutes during the duration of the inspection, which indicated a fault in the system. The constant beeping may result in children and staff ignoring the signals in the event of a real emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in their response that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Managers are required to monitor nappy changing and to check cleaning records are completed.

1. The nappy changing retraining has taken place for all staff and is monitored continuously by management.
2. A deep clean of the nappy changing area has been carried out.
3. A deep clean of the outdoor area has taken place.
4. Butterflies room sanitary area was deep cleaned.
5. A service and cleaning of the mechanical air vents was arranged.
6. Staff have been briefed on strategies to support children in maintaining safe toileting practice for infection control purposes.

Fire Safety:

Basic fire safety training has been rolled out for all staff through our online portal, along with fire warden safety training for persons in charge. These courses have been made mandatory.

7. Fire drills have been completed and monthly fire drills will take place.
8. The fault was established and a battery needed to be replaced; this has since been replaced and evidence submitted.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1-6 Photographic and documented evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Fire Safety:

7-8 Photographic and documented evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

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Summary Comment

The statements, photographic and documented evidence was reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and has been deemed to have met the requirements of this part of the Regulations.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) Each child attending the service was checked in and out by a staff member. A record of each child's attendance, detailing the arrival and departure time of each child was maintained. This record was available for inspection. The record was maintained and recorded on an electronic device, the information of which was shared with the parents or guardian of the children. Each parent received information pertaining only to their own child.

(3)(a)

A register of people entering the premises other than those outlined above in (3) (a) was available for inspection.

The following information was recorded for each person as outlined above.

- The date
- The person's name
- The reason for entry

(b) A daily register of visitors to the service was maintained.

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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

(2)(a) The registered provider had ensured that the service was equipped with first aid box. This first aid box was stored in the office in the front lobby.

(b) The first aid box was available to children when required.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

23/02/2026

An immediate action notice was issued to the service. On the day of inspection, there was not a person trained in First Aid Responder on the premises when the inspectors arrived on the premises.

24/02/26

The registered provider submitted a response outlining an action plan to ensure that there were enough adults appropriately trained in first aid available to the children while they attended the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in their response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Two adults have completed their first aid responder and are rostered during the operational hours of the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the two in date first aid responder certificates were submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The Early Years Inspector reviewed the documentation submitted by the registered provider and has deemed it has met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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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) Written records of the fire drills undertaken in the service were kept by staff with the last fire drill recorded as having been undertaken on the 12/12/2025.
- (b) A certificate of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment was recorded as being serviced on the 10/07/25 and fire alarms were serviced on the 12/01/26. Documentation for both were available for inspection.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the playrooms and in front lobby and in the corridors.