

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE053
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Name of Service:	Tiddlywinks and Scallywags
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Address of Service:	86 Carton Square, Dillons Row, Maynooth, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W23 WC98
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Name of Registered Provider:	Brenda McElligot, Roberta Hines
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	13/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	45	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X38W.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern and R. Phillips
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Tiddlywinks and Scallywags provides part time and sessional education and care to pre-school children aged 2-6 years. The service operates from a purpose-built premises within a housing development on the outskirts of Maynooth. The service has four pre-school rooms. Two of these rooms provide an early intervention service for children with special educational needs. The service operates from 08:30 – 16:30 Monday to Friday. A secured outdoor play area is available at the side and rear of the building.

Staffing

There are 14 staff members employed to work in the service including the registered providers. Twelve staff were present in the service during the inspection. Ten staff were allocated to work directly with the 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 areas of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ notifications and complaints. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 (2), (3), (4) & (7) (a) – Management and recruitment, regulation 15 (1) (f) – Record of pre-school child, regulation 16 (1) (k) - Record in relation to pre-school service, regulation 19 (1) (b) & (3) - Health, welfare and development of child and regulation 27 - Supervision. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Early Intervention 1 room.

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

The inspection was carried out due to information received by the inspectorate on 10 October 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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.

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a named person in charge and a person who could deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The person named to deputise was present when the inspectors arrived and remained on the premises throughout the inspection. The person in charge arrived during the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or named deputy to be present at all times of opening.

The inspection focused on five staff files to include three staff working in the Early Intervention 1 room and two staff who were employed since the previous inspection dated 7 October 2024 for regulations 9 (2) (a), (b) & (d), 9 (4) and 9 (7) (a). Regulation 9 (2) (c) was inspected for all staff.

- (2)
- (a) & (b) Each staff member had two past employer references available. Each reference had a record of verification.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was required and available for all five staff members.
- (3) The documents specified above were dated prior to the staff's start dates evidencing the procedures had been carried out before staff commencing work in the service.
- (4) Each staff member held a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent to at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- (7) (a) Staff had a record of their induction which included provision of the service's policies, procedures and statements. Records of training were available including child protection training. Staff confirmed they had been provided with the service's policies and procedures and had participated in one-to-one supervision meetings with management.

Non-Compliance Information

(7) (a) It is acknowledged that management held supervision meetings with staff. However, the records of the most recent meetings were dated June 2024. This was at variance with the services staff supervision policy which stated supervision meetings would be held every six weeks.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(7)(a) The staff supervision policy was amended to state a formal supervision meeting will be scheduled once a year. The amended staff supervision policy was discussed with staff at the staff meeting on 19 November 2025.

Staff were informed a formal supervision meeting will take place once a year. When reviewing the service's policies and procedures annually, management will do their utmost to ensure that the service's policies and procedures align to the practices in the setting.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Agenda and minutes for staff meeting dated 19 November 2025
- Staff supervision policy

Summary Comment

The actions have been deemed to appropriately address the non-compliance.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The inspection focused on the content of the staff training, staff supervision, accident and incident, behaviour management and complaints policies. The policies were clear and comprehensive and detailed procedures covering the required aspects of the service's operation.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-
(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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. There were 10 adults working directly with a maximum of 45 children.

(2) & (4) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement for the age of children and type of service provided was always maintained.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff members on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for a minimum of two staff to be on the premises at all times of opening.

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:

(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;

Compliance Information

(1) (f) Records were available detailing special needs in relation to the children. These included relevant information regarding individualised care and education to support the children's wellbeing and development.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (i) The service had a daily staff roster which was reflective of the staff present during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (k) It is acknowledged that records were available detailing accidents and incidents that had involved children whilst attending the service. However, the service did not have a record of an incident which was brought to the attention of management on 7 October 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (k) An incident form in writing was completed by the service manager on 14 October 2025. The registered providers and manager conducted a thorough review of the service's policies and procedures in the aftermath of the incident. At the staff meeting on 19 November 2025 management informed staff of the need to bring to the attention of management and document any incident reported by a parent of a child attending the preschool.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Copy of incident record
- Agenda and minutes for staff meeting dated 19 November 2025
- Accident and incident policy

Summary Comment

The actions have been deemed to appropriately address the non-compliance.

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (b) The inspectors observed appropriate care practices in place. The adults supported the children to manage their personal care. The children brought food from home and sat together with the adults when eating. The adults regularly offered the children drinks. They demonstrated a knowledge of the individual children's development in relation to toileting and discussed children's routines regarding nappy changing. They helped them to wash their hands at appropriate times. Staff discussed working in partnership with parents and external support agencies to support children's development and wellbeing.

The adults demonstrated affection and warmth in all their interactions with the children, responding to their cues and speaking kindly to them. They comforted the children when they became upset. A key person approach was used to support children in forming secure attachments. The adults demonstrated skills in maintaining a calm and well-managed environment where each child's development was promoted. They fostered positive relationships with children by offering support through attentive listening, responsive interactions and gentle guidance.

Transitions between activities were well managed with staff explaining to the children what was going to happen next and showing the children picture cards of the next activity. Staff were observed gently assisting the children using emotion regulation strategies when needed.

(3) Prohibited practices were outlined in the service's behaviour management policy. Staff demonstrated a knowledge of the policy and the prohibited practices during discussions with the inspectors. They were aware of the service's designated liaison person as detailed in the services child safeguarding statement. Staff

demonstrated respectful practices as outlined under regulation 19 (1) (b) and no prohibited practices were observed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The children were observed to be well supervised throughout the inspection. This included when playing, engaging in activities, eating and spending time outdoors.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The registered providers did not notify the agency of a child who sought medical treatment upon collection from the service on 6 October 2025. The service managers reported they had received the information on 7 October 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) A Notification of Incident form was completed by the registered provider and service manager and submitted to Tusla on 18 November 2025. A thorough review was conducted by management of the service's policies and procedures in the aftermath of the incident with particular focus on policy 17 (Accident and Incidents). This review served to refresh management on the specific incidents that require submission of a Notification of Incident form to Tusla and that Tusla must be notified of such incidents within three working days.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Accident and incident policy

- Copy of notification of incident submitted to Tusla

Summary Comment

The actions have been deemed to appropriately address the non-compliance.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
- (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-

- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
- (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.

Compliance Information

(1) (a), (b) & (c) The service had a complaints policy which specified the requirements of the regulation.

(2) (a) & (b) The person in charge reported that they had received one complaint in relation to the service within the past two years. A record of the complaint was available and evidenced the complaint was dealt with in accordance with the policy.

(3) (a) & (b) The record detailed the nature of the complaint and included the manner in which it was dealt with. The record was made available to the inspectors on the premises.

(4) The record stated the complaint was dealt with in 2025. The person in charge was aware of the record retention requirements.