

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015KE172

Name of Service: Minnows Childcare

Address of Service: 13 Straffan Wood, Straffan Green, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

Eircode: W23 F2Y9

Name of Registered Provider: Joyce Grant

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date(s) of Inspection: 15/01/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	23
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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 Click or tap here to enter text.

Description of service

Minnows Childcare provides a full day and part-time early years service, Monday to Friday from 7.30am to 6.30pm. The service is in a two-storey purpose-built premises in a housing estate on the outskirts of Maynooth. Children are allocated to one of three rooms according to their age and stage of development. An outdoor play area is located at the rear of the property.

Staffing

There are nine staff members employed to work in the service including the service manager and a housekeeping staff member. Seven staff members are employed to work directly with the children. The service manager reports to a general manager who oversees all six of the registered providers services. Seven staff members were present in the service on inspection. The general manager attended the feedback meeting remotely.

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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. On inspection additional non-compliance was identified under regulation 8. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, welfare and development of child and regulation 27 Supervision. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Butterflies and Caterpillar rooms.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

(3) Where a registered provider has been unable for good and proper reason to notify the Agency within the time specified in paragraph (1) or (2), as the case may be, of a change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2), the registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing of the change as soon as possible thereafter.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) & (3) The service was registered to accommodate children aged 2-6 years. Two children aged 1-2 years were present in the Caterpillars room. The registered provider had not notified the Early Years Inspectorate of the change in age profile of children accommodated by the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A notification of change of circumstances form has been submitted to reduce the age profile of the children to 1-6 years with a maximum of 30 children attending.

Supporting documentation submitted

Proposed change in circumstance record.

Summary Comment

The change to registration status was approved. The non-compliance has been adequately addressed.

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 service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise.
 - (b) The deputy person in charge was always on the premises during the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or a person who could deputise to be present at all times of opening.
 - (c) The management structure was clear. Staff roles and lines of authority were documented. Staff members demonstrated an awareness of their roles and responsibilities and the lines of authority within the service.

(2)

(a) & (b) Appropriate consideration had been given to references. These had been sourced from past employers and from reputable sources where staff members had only one previous employer. Verification checks of the references were documented.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff members. Garda vetting disclosures had been renewed in accordance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, which requires services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting had been sourced for all staff members who had lived in another state for more than six months as an adult.

(4) All staff members employed to work directly with children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults were working with the children. There were 5 adults working directly with 23 children. The manager was available to provide break cover and help as needed.

(2) 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 adults to be on the premises at all times of opening.

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 children moved freely within the rooms, engaging in play and activities. All children spent time in the outdoor area. Transitions between activities and care routines were well managed with staff explaining to the children what was going to happen next. Snacks and meals were offered to the children at regular intervals. Drinks were always available within the rooms and were offered with meals and snacks.

Staff supported the children to manage their personal care. They prompted the children to wash their hands and clean their faces at appropriate times, assisting the younger children as needed. Bibs were provided in the Caterpillars room to protect the children's clothes from becoming soiled or wet when eating. Children who wore nappies had these changed at regular intervals and in between when required. The children were dressed in coats and hats appropriate to the weather when playing outside. The youngest children were dressed in waterproof coveralls. Each child had a change of clothes available for use if necessary.

The children were provided with an opportunity to sleep after dinner. They slept on low beds appropriate to their age and stage of development. The children were made comfortable for sleep with their outer clothing and shoes removed and soothers given to those who used them.

Supporting Relationships around Children

The adults fostered positive relationships with children by offering support through responsive interactions, attentive listening and gentle guidance. They were observed responding appropriately to cues, comforting children when they became upset. Group activities, such as shared meals and cooperative play, were designed to develop communication skills, strengthen social bonds and help children build friendships.

A key person approach was used to support children in forming secure attachments. Children were comforted when they became upset. Minor conflicts were managed promptly and calmly by staff, using age-appropriate techniques. Pictures of children's families were displayed at their eye-level. Staff discussed maintaining connections with families by communicating at drop-off and collection, through phone calls and a social media app and holding meetings when needed to support children's emotional and social development.

Physical and Material Environment

The rooms were bright and laid out with open shelves which displayed a variety of materials, including fine motor equipment such as blocks and puzzles. These were within easy reach of the children, promoting child-led choice and decision-making. Low level tables and chairs were available for meals and table-top activities. There were designated interest areas including home corners, mark-making zones, construction areas and dress-up areas. These were appropriately resourced with equipment and props to support imaginative and creative play and learning. Opportunities were provided for messy play including use of play dough and sand.

Each room had an area with soft matting and cushions where children could take a break from activities or rest. A small library was located next to the rest areas with books appropriate to the age and stages of the children. The outdoor area had an all-weather surface with equipment to support physical and creative play including tyres, a small slide, a balance board, ride-on-toys, a play kitchen as well as space for free movement.

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) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored in conspicuous positions easily accessible to staff.

(b) The first aid boxes were always available for use.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) It is acknowledged that five staff members had certificates in first aid training for children dated 2023 and 2024. However, only one of the adults had the required First Aid Responder training certificate and this person was absent on the day of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Two staff members have been registered to attend First Aid Responder training in March 2025. The service will make sure that if trained staff are leaving in future other staff will be trained beforehand.

Supporting documentation submitted

Record of communication confirming registration for training.

Summary Comment

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

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 always well supervised by the adults, including when transitioning between the rooms and the outdoor area.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

(d) The premises was clean and well maintained. Cleaning schedules were in place and the staff reported repairs are carried out promptly when required.