

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK096
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Name of Service:	Urlingford Pre-School for Little Learners
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Address of Service:	Old School, Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	E41 H974
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Name of Registered Provider:	Angela Brennan
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton.
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

Urlingford Pre-School for Little Learners is a private registered part-time childcare service located in the town of Urlingford in north county Kilkenny. The service provides a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service between the hours of 09:00 to 12:30. An optional part-time service is offered from 08:30 to 13:30 hours. The service operates from the old school hall in the town of Urlingford and is comprised of two large classrooms, two smaller activity classrooms, adjacent child sized toilet facilities to each of the large classrooms and three outdoor play areas located directly at the back of the premises.

Staffing

There were ten staff members employed in the service, including the registered provider. All staff members who as part of their role in the service was to work directly with the children in attendance held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 15-Record of a Pre-school Child,

Regulation 21-Equipment and Materials,

Regulation 22- Food and Drink,

Regulation 23-Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 24-Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance,

Regulation 25-First Aid,

Regulation 26-Fire Safety Measures,

As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms classroom 2 and the outdoor play areas.

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 registered provider, 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, 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.

(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 registered provider was the designated person in charge and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The staff roster demonstrated that the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation.

(c) A clear outline of the management structure was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall of the service, identifying the roles and responsibilities of everyone employed in the service. The management structure was clearly observed during inspection with each staff member observed to be clearly aware of their role and responsibilities during the service process.

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(2) Staff files for ten staff members were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the staff members from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all ten staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was on file for one staff member employed in the service who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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,

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Compliance Information

(1) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The registered provider always ensured that there was an adequate number of adults directly caring for the number of pre-school children in the service. During the morning of the service there were 52 children aged 2 years and 8 months to 5 years directly cared for by 9 staff members.

In the afternoon there was 32 preschool children directly cared for by 6 staff members.

(4)(a) During the ECCE session from 09:00 to 12 :30 hours the following ratio of adults to children were maintained in the classrooms as follows.

In Classroom 1- there were 18 preschool children aged 2 years and 8 months to 4 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

In Classroom 2 -there were 25 preschool children aged 3 to 5 years directly cared for by 4 staff members.

In Classroom 3- there were 9 preschool children cared for by 1 staff member.

Children transitioned in and out of classroom 4 with staff supervision to assist in preparing for snack time or engage in messy play activities throughout the session with adult to child ratios always maintained throughout the service.

(4)(b) From 12:30 to 13:30 hours, the following ratio of adults to children were maintained in the classrooms as follows.

In Classroom 1- there were 16 preschool children aged 2 years and 8 months to 4 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

In Classroom 2 -there were 16 preschool children aged 3 to 5 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the registered provider and staff present, the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that there was always at least two qualified staff members onsite while preschool children attended the service.

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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:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (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;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of pre-school children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each child.

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*
- (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.*

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Compliance Information

(19)(a)(b) The inspector observed the following throughout the course of the inspection.

Physical Environment.

The children from all classrooms spent the morning in the outdoor play area which they could directly access via a back door of classroom 2. The outdoor play area was provided three defined areas and offered children a choice in the type of outdoor environment they wished to play in, irrelevant of what classroom they were assigned to. Several children ran freely across the enclosed all-weather surface pitch, which contained child-sized goal posts and opportunities for ball play.

In the durable surfaced part of the outdoor play area, children had access to an open sided garage which contained a selection of ride on toys, clean tyres and large soft blocks for the children to choose from. Children were observed enjoying driving the small vehicles of choice across the spacious durable surface, building towers of tyres and climbing inside, using their imagination and creative skills in developing block structures and driving around them. In the enclosed play area within the outdoor play space, children had the freedom to play imaginatively on the climbing frame, bridge and lookout tower, to rest and chat in the playhouse, to climb through the tunnel in the mud pit, jumping and digging in the muddy puddles that they had dug themselves in the mud pit. Several children sat in the sand house, a wooden garden shed with a floor full of fine sand, using diggers trucks shovels and buckets to build and create castles. Children explained to the inspector that it was a great idea for the sand pit to be in the shed, as when the staff and registered provider could keep it clean and safe by locking the shed doors and windows upon the service closing. The children animatedly stated, "It's to prevent the birds going in and pooping in it". Additional areas of interest providing opportunities for imaginary play, physical challenge and development of fine and gross motor skills included a large mud kitchen, a growing area for flowers and plants, a water station, slide, basket swing, see-saw and balance beams.

Children were observed to be very comfortable and warm as they enjoyed outdoor play, dressed in appropriate all-weather clothing, wellies, hats and gloves. All the staff were observed to ensure that they positioned themselves at viewing points which provided a clear overview of all the children while they played. The inspector noted that the staff had brought all the children's individual drink bottles out to the outdoor play area to ensure children had access to their drinking water while outside.

Basic and Individual Care Needs.

At 11:15 hours staff spoke with the children enquiring if they would like to go inside for their snack. The children expressed eagerness to do so, hungry after their outdoor activities. On going inside, the children stored away their

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individual outdoor clothing on personalised hooks provided in two changing rooms. The children used the bathroom facilities, washing their hands after playing outdoors and again after going to the toilet if needed. Some of the children proceeded to their assigned classroom and prepared the tables with appropriate plates and eating utensils. Each day a poster displayed the names of the children in each group that were helping on that day.

The inspector noted that a staff member and two of the children who were designated helpers/ chefs for the day had come indoors to one of the small classrooms earlier and were observed to have assisted in preparing slices of watermelon, halved grapes, chicken sandwiches, brown bread and butter and mandarin oranges as part of the national pre-school nutrition programme encouraging the engagement and participation of children in promoting healthy nutrition and education on choosing, preparing and eating healthy options. The inspector observed that the designated staff member and two children preparing the mandarins chatted amicably about how good fruit was and the children enjoyed accomplishing the tasks of peeling the small mandarin oranges and arranging the food nicely on serving plates. Individual children who were prescribed special diets brought food from home and where appropriate also availed of foods provided in the service.

A notice board in each of the two entrance halls displayed information on what each day's menu included for parents to see at drop-off time in the morning.

During snack time children sat and chatted, children who had never tasted watermelon before described how juicy it was and like that it was cut in the same shape as pizza slices. Children could help themselves to more sandwiches or fruit and used lovely manners when addressing the staff or each other asking for plates to be passed or shared. Staff expressed appreciation at the lovely manners that the children used, with the positive praise offered greatly pleasing the children.

In discussion with the staff and registered provider, the inspector was informed that a selection of menus for each day had been developed in conjunction with the children and the foods that they suggested. On review of the documented menus listed the inspector observed that the children and staff had developed a variety of mini menus for each day which included some of the following: scrambled eggs, brown bread, banana and apple slices bagels with ham and cheese, brown bread, watermelon and apple slices /chicken sandwiches, raisins, crunchy green beans / pancakes, apples, berries and brown bread / homemade pizza with home-made tomato purée and grated cheese /French toast and bananas. Staff explained that these options could be varied over a two-week period as per the children's choices, but new ideas were always welcomed and incorporated into the menus as children developed new ideas from food experiences outside of the service.

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Supporting Relationships and Interactions around Children.

As children finished their snack in their own time, unhurried by staff, they naturally relaxed in preparation for story time which they told the inspector that they looked forward to each day as the staff reading the stories made them fun, by changing their voices and doing actions. Children were observed to relax and listen attentively engaged in the excitement of the story lines being told. Children were responded to enthusiastically when they asked questions during story time, with staff encouraging interesting discussions about the story lines and endings.

Following story time, the children availed of the opportunity to play freely, engaging in the many interest areas available in the classrooms, playing imaginatively, building and creating, solving puzzles and creating artistic pieces.

A parent notice board in each entrance hall to the service displayed an overview of the planned curricular activities for the week ahead. Records of short-term curricular planning demonstrated how staff emerged children's ideas and opportunities for learning around these interests into the curriculum in the service. Video recordings of the children participating in the planned weekly activities were shared with their parents on the service's class group media applications weekly. Each child's learning journal went home with the child at the end every term. The registered provider explained how in conjunction with each child's key worker, individual meetings were held with each child's parents / guardians in the February prior to the child's planned transition to primary school. This meeting provided an overview of the child's individual learning and progress and shared the information with parents that the early years educators recorded in each individual child's "Mo Scéal!" record for the principal and staff in the primary school that they would be going to.

The registered provider was observed to have arranged a meeting to share this information with a parent on the afternoon of the inspection. Staff also confirmed with the inspector that teachers visited the pre-school service from each of the three primary schools that children were proposed to transition to.

Annually at the end of every February, the registered provider and staff held an open evening for any prospective parents and children to attend to see the service and hear about the service's purpose and curricular function. On the last Thursday of June each year, the staff and registered provider arranged for children that were planned to commence in the service the following September, to come to the service for a period of three hours with a parent or guardian.

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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 front area of the service was secured by a metal gate and child height wall. The service has two entrance doors, one entrance at either side of the building which were secured with call bell systems and entry to the service could only be authorised by a staff member.

The large spacious outdoor play area which was the area that children had access to for outdoor play was secured by high twelve-foot metal fencing.

The artificial grass pitch was surrounded with high fencing to prevent footballs landing into the two other play areas.

The staff in the service ensured that all cleaning equipment and cleaning agents were stored safely away in a secure designated area which children could not access.

Infection Control:

Adequate handwashing facilities were provided in the two-bathroom facilities available in the service directly adjacent to each of the two large classrooms. Wash basins were also available in the classrooms so children could wash their hands after painting or messy play.

Children and staff were observed to spontaneously wash their hands after outdoor play, using the toilet as well as being observed to naturally include handwashing as part of the ritual for preparing for snack times.

Administration of Medication:

Child centred medication plans were available in the service with clear directions for the administration of emergency medications if required. On review of a sample of medication forms the inspector was assured that staff carried out administration of prescribed medications to children in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place in the service for any planned outings away from the service.

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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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that staff checked all children in and out of the service with the individual child's name time of arrival and departure recorded daily.

(3) The registered provider ensured that-

(a) No unauthorised person could enter the premises without that person's entry being approved by a staff member or the registered provider.

(b) A visitors' book was maintained recording the entry of any persons other than those referred to in paragraph (1). The inspector was requested to complete the written record upon arrival at the service, detailing the date, name, contact number, reason for entry, name of person who approved access and check in and exit times.

(4) The inspector observed that a record of all visitors to the service had been maintained for the last two years.

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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

(1) There were eight staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, there was at least two or more staff members with FAR training present in the service. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection.

(2)(a)(b) There was a designated first aid press available in the service which was adequately stocked with appropriate first aid supplies.

Records demonstrated that the first aid supplies were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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 firefighting 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) The registered provider ensured that there was a monthly fire drill carried out in the service and a record was maintained of same. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 30 January 2026.

(b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance checks of the firefighting equipment and fire alarm system in the premises. The last maintenance check on the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place on 02 October 2025 and for the smoke alarm system as having taken place on 27 November 2025.

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(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the main entrance hall of the building and in the classrooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a part-time day care for up to a maximum number of 55 children was available for review and displayed in the service.

The insurance certificate provided covers from 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.