

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY025
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Name of Service:	Budding Explorers
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Address of Service:	Lisloose, Tralee, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V92 FTX8
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nicola Barry
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	28/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	None
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Áras an Phobail, Deans Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry.
Inspection undertaken by:	N. Reidy & M. Burke
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Budding Explorers is registered as a privately operated early years service, catering for children aged between 2 years and 6 years on a sessional basis. The children attending on inspection were aged between 3 years and 5 years. The service offers one session between the hours of 8.50 am and 11.50 am Monday to Friday. The service is located in a purpose-built building at the registered provider's home setting in Lisloose, Tralee, Co. Kerry. The service consists of 1 playroom with sanitary accommodation and a spacious outdoor play area sanitary accommodation in a designated building.

Staffing

Currently, there are 3 adults attached to the service, all of whom work directly with the children each day. This includes the registered provider.

There was 1 adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme.

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 announced/unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 person in charge of the service was the registered provider, who had a designated deputy person to deputise in her absence.
- (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the registered provider and the designated deputy in charge were on duty to assist with the inspection process. The staff rosters demonstrated that the registered provider was on the premises during the hours of operation.
- (2) (a), (b) & (d) Following a review of the previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider it was determined that no new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. Garda vetting for the 2 staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.
- (c) The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) The 3 staff working directly with the children had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

- (1) Throughout the period of inspection, the registered provider did ensure that there was an adequate number of adults caring for the children attending the service.
- (3) There were 3 adults caring for 22 children attending the service on a sessional basis. The adult child ratio was correct and maintained.

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

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- On inspection, the outdoor space was used for the duration of the session. The children were observed to move about freely within the outdoor environment where they engaged in a range of free play and movement.
- The staff encouraged the children to interact and to engage with a wide range of materials, activities and equipment, based on the children's own choices, interests and their age and stage of development.
- The staff facilitated opportunities for small and large group activities and play as evidenced with sack races, dancing and movement to song, playing in the sand and in the covered in mud kitchen and sand areas for example.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet during the session. Children were observed to use the toilet facilities independently and under supervision from the staff as required.
- There was a toilet and a wash hand basin with a supply of warm and cold water accessible in a building located in the outdoor area, in addition to the sanitary accommodation provided in the playroom.
- In conversation with the staff, the children's individual toileting needs are accommodated in consultation with the parents.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their individual level of independence. This was evidenced for example when children when the children helped themselves to their individual lunch bags at the snack time.
- Handwashing following prior to the snack time and after using the toilet for example was encouraged by the staff.
- The staff assisted children in small groups of two to three children at a time with handwashing, as was observed before eating.
- At the snack time observed, each of the children had enough time to eat and enjoy their food without being rushed in any way.
- Conversations between the staff and the children ensued during snack time in a relaxed, calm environment.
- The service provided crockery and cutlery for the children as required.
- The play activities and care routines observed on inspection were conducted at an unhurried and calm pace, catering for the children's individual needs.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff members were observed to have a positive and caring relationship with children. They were observed to comfort children and happy conversations were heard between staff and children.
- The staff members spoke to the children in a calm way and positive interactions between staff and children were observed.
- The children were playing freely together, for example with toys in and around the tent, the mud kitchen and the sandpit areas.
- Children were observed asking the staff members for their involvement when they wanted to show something of interest to them.
- In conversation with the staff and as observed on inspection the children happily took part in the fundraiser Barnardo's "Big Toddle Little Heros"
- The children arrived at the service dressed in their costumes of choice. The costumes represented characters from different genres, that supported socio-dramatic play and extended their imaginative and creative development.
- Good evidence of teamwork and teambuilding were observed, when children were preparing and participating in the sack race with staff assisting children into the sacks and giving them the choice of who wished to participate.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- The children praised each other for their achievements in the sack race with a collective cheer and clap.
- A selection of the activities observed, included for example, children engaging in imaginative play with cooking kitchen equipment such as bowls and sieves in the sandpit. Other children were hopping and skipping between tyres facilitating safe risk play and using the climbing frame
- Staff members assisted children with language development, through interactive play with toys of the children's preferences.
- Children were observed fetching a toy watering can, to pretend play watering flowers and later playing with a digger on the bench with a staff member.
- Transitions between activities appeared seamless, with children knowing the beat and movement to songs.
- In preparation for primary school transition, the staff encouraged and enabled the children to take their place in line to walk to the collection point at the gate.
- During conversation, some children informed the inspectors they were looking forward to going to school.
- The staff explained that the service avails of the Access and Inclusion Model funding to support children with additional needs.
- Children were observed playing and encouraging children with additional needs to participate in group activities.

Physical & Material Environment:

- The playroom was colourfully decorated with visual displays of various artwork for example animals hanging across the wall and a selection of educational posters
- The room was spacious and it was well ventilated by means of openable windows and the patio door.
- There was ample space in the outdoor area. The area consisted of a vast well maintained garden space with mature trees and a variety of shrubbery for children to move about freely and accommodate the children's activity choices.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) There were adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and outdoors as evidenced on inspection.

- The playroom had adequate free floor space for children to move about freely.
- It was equipped with a wide selection of activities to support the developmental and wellbeing of children, with a selection of jigs-saws; puzzles; age-appropriate books and toys, which were accessible to children.
- It was evident that a range of art mediums of paint and textures were used to support their imaginative, creative, and sensory development.
- The art and craft stations had jars of art stationery equipment containing buttons, adhesive crafts items, paints, crayons, and colouring pencils.
- The outdoor play area was closed off from the registered provider's private dwelling with wooden-wired fences and locked gates.
- A high wired fencing, located near the stream secured safe play in the outdoor play area.
- The placement of the play materials and equipment facilitated an outdoor environment conducive to imaginative and creative play such as: -
 - bird feed hanging from a few trees
 - a closed off glasshouse with growing plants inside (installed since the last inspection)
 - a fenced off chicken coup with a hen roaming around
 - a flower bed with a digging area to encourage an outdoor connection with nature
 - a pond with tadpoles with a secure covering in place for children to see inside.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- The materials and equipment in the outdoor area were arranged so they were readily visible and accessible to promote independent free access by the children at all times.
- The play materials included for example: -
 - a mud kitchen with a selection of pots and pans
 - a playhouse
 - a spacious sandpit
 - climbing frames
 - a pond easily visible to the children that was secured with a cover
 - wood-stump chairs, re-useable tyres; benches, slides and children's tables and chairs near sheltered trees and shrubbery.
- An external storage unit containing a variety of categorised boxes of toys, blocks and miniature animals were accessible to children for fine motor skills and garden steps for gross motor skills.
- The staff member showed a selection of activities in the artwork and collages, such as the lifecycle of the tadpole and displays of insects. On the day of inspection, pictures of children doing particular activities, were in the preparation process of being displayed in their individual portfolios.
- A selection of wildflowers was in various parts of the garden and an outdoor poster of labelled pictured insects, were provided to support children's sensory and learning development and connection with the external environment.

(b) There were adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day.

- The indoor rest area, located near a window offered a view on to the outside garden patio and fields and had a decorated area with a colourful, corner canopy with a soft floor mat displaying the image of a motorway and a toy multi-storage carpark and garage.
- The rest area had shelves with a variety of age-appropriate books accessible to the children.
- Children had freedom to rest when needed and had the option to lie on the grass, sit in a quiet corner of the garden with a table and play independently with others or on their own or in the outside tent.
- In conversation with staff, the inspectors were informed that rugs are supplied to children if needed for additional comfort depending on weather conditions.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The food for the morning snack was supplied by the parents/guardians. The morning snack, “the picnic” was line with the Barnardos “Big Toddle Little Heros” fundraiser on the day.
- The food observed included crackers, yogurts, soup, hummus and a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- The children had access to their water bottles during the session as they wanted.
- There was no child on the day of inspection reported to the inspectors with specific dietary requirements.
- In conversation with the staff, if unhealthy food was in the children’s lunchboxes, parents were notified of the healthy eating plan in person and by a note in the children’s lunchboxes.

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 certifications on file demonstrating that 3 staff members attached to the service had current First Aid Responder (FAR) training.

(2)

(a) The sufficiently equipped first aid box was stored at a high level in the kitchenette in the playroom, out of the reach of children.

(b) At all times when the service is in operation, the first aid box was accessible to the adults in the event that children required them.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) The service had maintained in writing a record of the following: -
- (a) A template to record each fire drill that had taken place in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 21 April 2026 for the morning and afternoon sessions.
 - (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance checks of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm. The records on file demonstrated the last check for the smoke alarm was 10 March 2026 and for the firefighting equipment was 12 May 2026.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was displayed in the playroom.