

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH044
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Name of Service:	Knockbridge Childcare
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Address of Service:	St. Marys Hall Community Centre, Knockbridge, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 CP3X
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marian Scanlon
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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

This privately owned service commenced in 2002. It provides a sessional service to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 9 am to 12.30 pm and is registered to cater for up to 30 preschool children. The service partakes in the ECCE scheme Monday to Friday. This service is located in the local community hall in the rural area of Togher, Co. Louth. There are 2 care rooms, sanitary accommodation, and an outdoor play area to the side of the community hall.

Staffing

There are 5 staff members, including the registered provider, who work directly with the children. A dance contractor also attends the service every 2 weeks.

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 and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9: Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11: Staffing Levels, Regulation 19: Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23:

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Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25: First Aid, Regulation 26: Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 28: Insurance and Regulation 29: Premises.

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, 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, 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 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 designated person in charge, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, the designated person in charge or the named person in charge was on the premises.

(2) The files for 5 staff and 1 contractor were reviewed.

(a) (b) A total of 12 references was available on file as required.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 5 staff and the contractor. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 5 employed staff and the contractor.

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(d) A review of the employment history for 5 staff and the contractor demonstrated that no adults had lived outside the State of Ireland for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months; therefore, police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 5 staff employed to work directly with the preschool children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at maximum attendance

One adult cared for 11 children aged 3 years 7 months to 4 years 2 months in Preschool room 1.

Two adults cared for 16 children aged 4 years 3 months to 4 years 9 months in Preschool room 2.

In addition to the above, the registered provider arrived on site following the commencement of the inspection and remained on site, assisting in the care rooms for the remainder of the inspection.

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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
- (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.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

The children take in their own lunches from home, and lunch time is at approx. 11am – 11.15am following outdoor play time in each care room. Children's lunches included a selection of sandwiches, wraps, crackers, breadsticks, bread rolls, yoghurts, cheese, vegetables, and chopped fruit. Children's drink bottles were stored in a container accessible during the preschool session. The children in Preschool 2 were accompanied to the toilet due to the location across the hallway from the care room.

Rest areas were available in each care room to include a soft foam mat and cushion in Preschool 2, and a carpeted corner, with cushions and a sot blanket in Preschool 1.

Outdoor play was facilitated for the children in each room before their lunchtime. Children were dressed suitably for the weather on the day of inspection.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival in both care rooms was warm and welcoming. The children were engaged in activities such as building bricks, playing with dolls, sand play, tabletop toys and playing with small world garages and trucks. The staff were observed to sit with the children and facilitate the children's play experiences, for example, clearing areas for the children to build a large floor jigsaw, and setting up a mat for floor play with cars. The children appeared familiar with the staff who cared for them and were observed to call for staff when they needed support, such as help with toys.

The staff spoke positively to the children throughout their play with comments such as *"that's beautiful"* about a child's chalk drawing and *"great work"* when the children were building connecting toys. The staff were

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observed to promote positive behaviour using phrases such as “gentle hands” and were observed to encourage the children to interact positively with their peers using encouragement and phrases such as “play nicely” “inside voices” and “let’s work together” which prevented any minor disagreements over play materials from escalating. Praise was given for positive behaviour interactions that took place between the children. The staff were observed to consistently communicate with the children using gentle tones and positive language. The children appeared content and confident within their care environments and led their play by choosing what to play with both indoors and outdoors.

Communication with parents is in person at arrival and collection, through the use of a social media page, monthly newsletter updates and poster reminders when required, i.e. themed days, for example, St Patricks day party reminder.

The staff team were observed to work well together, calling on each other when required, and ensuring transitions were smooth for children by letting them know what was coming next in their routine for example, outdoor play, tidy up time and lunch time.

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 main entrance door was secured upon the inspector's arrival. The entrance door remained locked at all times during the inspection, ensuring no unauthorised person could enter the building or no child could leave the building unsupervised. A visitor log was maintained, and the inspector was requested to sign in and out upon arrival and departure. Ground surfacing, both indoor and outdoor, was maintained in a good state of repair. Storage areas were inaccessible to children. Cleaning products were stored safely out of the reach of children. The children were adequately supervised throughout the inspection process. The outdoor area was surrounded by high-level wooden fencing, walls and a secured gate. Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

Infection Control:

Handwashing was observed to take place after the children played outdoors, which was just before lunchtime. Thermostatically controlled warm water, hand soap, bins, and paper towels were available at each wash hand

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basin. Cleaning schedules were in place, up to date and completed by the relevant staff. Children's lunches taken in from home were stored in the service's fridge until lunch time.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Corner edges were unprotected on a grey play table in Preschool 2, and a chipped corner was exposed on a table in Preschool 1, which poses a risk of injury to a child. This is a recurring non-compliance identified upon the last inspection, where the registered provider's corrective and preventive action of "*protective corner covers have been put on tables. Protective corners covers will remain on table and corner areas*" has not prevented the non-compliance from recurring.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Boxes were sanded and corners removed. Replaced the table with a different table in Preschool 1. Staff to replace corner covers immediately if they are removed. Boxes in Preschool 2 room have had the corners rounded. The table is disposed of and replaced. Preschool 2: replaced the corner covers of tables.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of corners rounded on grey units, a replacement table, and corner protectors in place.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 23.

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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) The registered provider ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Two staff members rostered on the day of inspection held in-date FAR training certificates.
- (2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available in each care room and were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

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) A record of the fire drills that take place monthly was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 26 February 2026.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 23 May 2025, and the smoke alarms were dated 07 August 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 30 pre-school children attending the service. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated,

Compliance Information

(c) The service was adequately lit, heated and ventilated. The lighting was provided by a mixture of natural light leading from large windows, which was supplemented with fluorescent ceiling lights, which were fitted with protective covers. The care rooms and sanitary areas are heated by oil central heating radiators. The care rooms and sanitary areas were well ventilated and maintained between the required temperatures of 18°C - 22°C. The care rooms and sanitary areas are ventilated by openable windows.