

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH075
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Name of Service:	Pugwash Bay LTD
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Address of Service:	97 Loughantarve, Knockbridge, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 WT44
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Name of Registered Provider:	James Moore
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	17/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	19
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood and S. Skinnader
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	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Pugwash Bay Ltd Knockbridge is one of a chain of 6 Pugwash Bay services operated in Co. Louth and Co. Meath in addition to a further 8 early years services operated by the registered provider nationally. This service has been operating as an Early Years' service since 2008 and provides sessional, part-time, and full day care and education to pre-school children aged 0-6 years. The service is registered to accommodate 49 pre-school children and operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm each weekday.

The service operates from a purpose-built building in a residential area of Knockbridge, Co. Louth. The premises consists of 3 care rooms namely; The Ladybug Room, The Bumble Bees Room and The Caterpillar Room that are all located on the ground floor. Ancillary accommodation includes sanitary areas, a kitchen, an office and storage areas. There is access to an enclosed outdoor play area on the premises.

Staffing

There are 14 staff employed in the service. Thirteen staff are employed to work directly with the preschool children, and this includes the designated person in charge, supervisor, relief staff and the service regional area manager. One additional staff member is employed to carry out catering duties in the service.

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Ladybug and Bumble Bee 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 area regional manager, deputy 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 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) &(b) The service had a designated person in charge and named deputy person to deputise as required. On the day of the inspection the regional area manager and deputy person in charge were on the premises when the inspectors arrived on the premises and were present throughout the inspection.

(2) Following a review of the previous inspection information plus the information available during the inspection and a discussion with the area regional manager it was confirmed to the inspectors that there were 3 new members of staff employed since the last inspection.

(a)(b) The files of the 3 new staff members were reviewed, and the following was recorded.

- Two written and validated references from a past employer or alternative source were available for the 3 new members of staff.

- Written references for the remaining 11 staff were reviewed at the last inspection and met with regulatory requirements.

(c)

- A Garda vetting disclosure for all staff were reviewed and were available. These were found to adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

- Documentary evidence of international police vetting was available for all staff who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months, including 2 new members of staff.

(4)

- Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 12 out of 13 staff who work directly with pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification or a qualification deemed equivalent by the minister.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Insufficient documentary evidence was available to determine that 1 staff member who was observed working directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4) The staff member contacted the awarding body (QQI) to obtain official documentary evidence of their Level 5 Childcare qualification.

The qualification documentation has now been received and verified.

Copies of the qualification have been placed on the staff member's personnel file and are available for inspection. All new staff qualifications will be fully verified prior to onboarding. A copy of the full QQI Level 5 Major Award will be required and retained in the staff file; module transcripts alone will not be accepted.

A standardised Staff Qualification Verification Checklist will be completed for all new and existing staff to confirm compliance with minimum qualification requirements.

The Person in Charge/Service Manager will be responsible for checking, signing off and securely storing qualification documentation before a staff member works directly with children.

Annual audits of staff files will be conducted to ensure all required documentation remains complete, current and inspection ready.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Evidence of a component certificate
- Staff file audit template

Following additional communication, the registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Further information was then requested to provide evidence that the staff member had been awarded the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification. To date sufficient evidence has not been submitted to confirm this. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 has not been adequately addressed.

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 10:00am

- **The Ladybug Room:**

There were 5 preschool children aged 1-2 years with 2 members of staff. One additional member of staff was also present providing assistance in the care room as required.

- **The Caterpillar Room:**

There were 3 preschool children aged 2-3 years with 1 member of staff.

- **The Bumble Bees Room:**

There were 13 preschool children aged 3-5 years with 3 members of staff.

The area regional manager was also present in the service.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were on the premises at all times. This was verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records that were maintained in the service.

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

(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)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic needs:

- Breakfast was provided by the service and was reported to consist of a variety of cereals. The hot lunch was provided by an external catering company and reheated by the catering staff. On the day of inspection, the hot lunch was observed to consist of chicken curry and rice. The hot afternoon meal was prepared by the cook and consisted of potato stars and sweetcorn. The children were afforded plenty of time to finish their food. The dinners were of an age-appropriate consistency and portion size in the various rooms. Staff sat with the children while they were eating. In the Bumble Bee Room most children asked and received a second portion of the dinner. A child who did not eat the dinner was offered plain

rice and then crackers and butter which they then ate. Morning and afternoon snacks were provided by the parents from home and were appropriately stored in the fridge.

- Drinks were observed on low level tables in the care rooms, and the children could access them as required. Bottles of milk were also available and stored in the fridge.
- All children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting and step ups were provided. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required, when the children were brought to the sanitary accommodation off the care room. Gentle handwashing reminders were given to the children after toileting.
- Nappies were checked and changed on a regular basis with pleasant interactions between staff and children observed.
- Attention was given to personal care such as nose blowing, brushing hair and tying it up, the use of bibs for feeding and cleaning faces of the smaller children after their dinner.
- The children attending the Bumble Bee room had a change of environment to the outdoor area. The staff in the Ladybug room advised the inspector that the children will go outside in the afternoon after their sleep.

Supporting Relationships:

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the staff and children in all the rooms. The staff in the Ladybug Room were observed to use positive supportive language with the children to encourage them to share complete a task and support their independence e.g. *“will you give that togood boy will you get your own one...oh you are such a good helper.”* In the Bumble Bee Room the staff were observed to offer support to the children if they required assistance *“can we move over and give some space”, “that’s super cutting” and during a cutting activity a staff member was observed saying “we don’t mess with scissors why ??” ... to which all children replied, “ they’re dangerous”.*
- The children in the Ladybug room were observed to actively seek staff out. They were appropriately comforted when they were upset or tired.
- The staff in the service used an electronic application the “app” to communicate with parents about their child’s activities, sleep and food intake during the day. The staff were also observed to communicate verbally with parents at collection time. A ‘monthly newsletter’ has been developed and is on display in the service. This provides parents with information about upcoming curriculum and activities planned in the service e.g. open morning and science week.

- A key worker system was in place in the rooms. The 'key children' and allocated children notices were on display in the care rooms. This supported the development of positive relationships with the children and their families. The key worker was responsible for documenting activities and progress of the children's learning and development. Learning journals that contain photographs of the children's activities and written observations by staff are in development and are reported to be sent home to parents each month.
- The staff report that the service is currently working with an external quality development agency that supports quality development in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

At 13.45pm when the inspector entered the Caterpillar Room to do the afternoon headcount the room was converted to a sleep room and was in darkness. One child was awake and walking about the room with the staff member while 2 others slept. This child was awake from approximately 13.15pm. The lighting in the room was insufficient for the child to partake in meaningful activities either at the tabletop or in any other area of the room. It is acknowledged that the regional manager who came in after the inspector noted the darkness and immediately opened one of the blinds.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The manager spoke personally with each staff member to reinforce the importance of adequate lighting at all times, ensuring the environment reflects the current needs and activities of the children present.

An email was issued to all staff outlining the Safe Sleep Policy, specifically highlighting the section relating to room lighting and the care of awake children during rest periods.

A memo was issued to all staff, which they were required to read, sign, and return, confirming their understanding of and commitment to adhering to the Safe Sleep Policy going forward.

Immediate action was taken by management to increase lighting in the room once the issue was identified.

The manager will provide ongoing supervision and monitoring to ensure the Safe Sleep Policy and appropriate room lighting are consistently implemented.

A clear procedure is now in place whereby lighting must be adjusted immediately when any child wakes, to ensure the child can engage in age-appropriate and meaningful activities.

All staff covering rooms for breaks or lunches, including relief or new staff, will receive a verbal reminder at handover regarding lighting adjustments should a child wake.

The Safe Sleep Policy will be reviewed at staff meetings to reinforce expectations and ensure consistent understanding across the team.

Management will conduct periodic spot checks during rest periods to ensure compliance.

If required, the service will purchase and install an appropriate lamp for the room to ensure adequate lighting can be provided without disrupting sleeping children.

This issue and the actions taken will be recorded and reviewed as part of the service's quality and risk management process.

Supporting documentation submitted

Staff memo regarding lighting in sleep room

Copy of email to staff with safe sleep policy attached.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance together with documentary and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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-

(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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with a variety of soft mats, soft seats, fleecy throws, soft toys and cushions. These were spontaneously accessed by the children for a rest or to sit and read a book.
- A number of individual sleep mats, suitable for children aged over 2 years were available and observed in use in the Caterpillar room.
- A separate sleep room was located off the Ladybug Room and contained 6 standard cots. All mattresses were appropriately fitting and had the required safety labels attached.

(3)(a) A spacious outdoor area was available on the premises and is subdivided into two separate areas:

- Area 1 is an enclosed area located off the Ladybug and Caterpillar rooms. The area had an artificial grass surface and had some toys and equipment available including a low-level slide, sensory play trays, plastic playhouses, tyres for climbing and sitting and ride on equipment.
- The staff confirmed that area 2 which is located off the Caterpillar and Bumble Bee rooms remains inaccessible to the children and that it is to undergo renovation.

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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- All emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- Documentary evidence of daily risk assessments was evident in the service.
- Cleaning equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the preschool children.

- All blind cords in the service were restricted or inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels in the service to support hand washing in the service.
- Effective hand-washing practices were observed prior to mealtimes, after toileting and nappy changes.
- Pedal operated waste bins were observed in use and were appropriately maintained on the day of the inspection.
- Soothers were stored in individual named and lidded containers. The staff when questioned were familiar with the process of cleaning and storing soothers in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Safe Sleep:

- Safe sleep practices were observed in the service. A staff member was present with the sleeping children in the sleep room off the Ladybug room. Safe sleep observations were carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence was available of an up-to-date insurance certificate that provides cover for a maximum of 49 preschool children attending on a full day care basis. The certificate on display had an expiry date of 27/03/2026.