

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH087		
Name of Service:	Shining Stars Pre-School		
Address of Service:	5 Cherrybrook, Ardee, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A92 HN72		
Name of Registered Provider:	Eilish McNeice		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	31/03/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM 0
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath C15 CP23		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Taaffe		
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		

Description of service

Shining Stars Pre-School has been operating as an early years service since 2010 and is registered to accommodate a maximum of 11 pre-school children on a sessional basis. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.30am to 12.30pm from Monday to Friday for 38 weeks each year, catering for children aged 2 years 8 months to 6 years. School aged children are not accommodated in the service. Shining Stars Pre-School is conducted from one pre-school room attached to the side of the registered provider's family home, located in a residential setting in Ardee. The children's sanitary facilities adjoin the care room while staff can access toilet facilities in the registered provider's home. Outdoor play is facilitated in an enclosed garden to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and 1 staff member work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis.

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. 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 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 member 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,

(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 registered provider was the person in charge and the staff member was appointed to deputise in her absence if required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 9.35am on the morning of the inspection and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The staff files for the registered provider and the staff member were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for the registered provider and for the staff member.

(a)(b) All 4 reviewed references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and the staff member. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate

Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files there was no evidence that international police vetting was required for the registered provider or the staff member.

(4) The registered provider and staff member held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) On the day of inspection, the registered provider and the staff member were working directly with 10 pre-school children aged 3 years 5 months to 4 years 11 months who were all attending the service on a sessional basis.

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) An assessment of compliance of children’s records was carried out. Registration forms were available as required for all 12 children enrolled in the service (of whom 2 children share a place, each attending on a part-time basis) and each form was appropriately completed as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

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) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider and staff member supported each child's learning, development and well-being in the service:

Basic needs:

- The atmosphere in the service was warm and child-centred. The registered provider and staff member spoke positively and kindly to and about the children during the inspection and were observed initiating conversations and listening attentively to the children's stories and questions. The children seemed confident and familiar with both adults, using the registered provider's and staff member's names in a relaxed manner when calling upon them for assistance and to share in their achievements, and the adults were observed promptly responding to the children in an interested and engaged manner.
- Healthy snacks were provided for the children by their parents or guardians. The registered provider and staff member sat with the children at snack time, encouraging conversation and extending interactions in a sociable manner. Water was available for the children to take from low level shelving throughout the session, should they feel thirsty at any stage.
- The close proximity of the sanitary accommodation to the pre-school room facilitated children to use the toilet independently, with assistance provided by the registered provider and staff member when required. All children currently in attendance were toilet trained.
- The children engaged in outdoor play after having their morning snack, dressed appropriately for the warm weather conditions that prevailed on the day of the inspection. Children who reported feeling too warm were encouraged and assisted to remove outer layers of clothing.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The registered provider and staff member demonstrated skilful interaction strategies to support the children's play, learning and development. For example, this was evidenced in conversations heard during the inspection and on occasions when the adults acted as play partners with the children and supported the children's participation in their chosen activities including building blocks, helping the children to dress up in a range of costumes and props, and when playing running and dodging games in the garden. The registered provider and staff member engaged in warm interactions in social conversations with the children, frequently making reference to the children's siblings, parents, cousins and pets by name.

- The registered provider and staff member were observed displaying anticipation and positive responsiveness when children chose to change or opt out of activities and supported the children in selecting and participating in alternative play experiences.
- The inspector observed that children's transitions were very well supported with the adults using visual and verbal strategies. Upcoming activities were signalled by the registered provider and staff member who announced the countdown to tidy-up time in minutes, and tidy-up songs were used to signal and prepare children for up-coming activities and facilitate their participation in the daily routine.
- Communication to and from the parents was facilitated electronically through a smartphone messenger application. Parents, grandparents and childminders were greeted warmly and communicated with in a friendly manner at collection time. The service fostered a sense of belonging in the local community with photographs available showing visitors on site this year including the lollipop man, the postman and fire fighters from the local fire station with the fire truck parked outside the premises. The mobile library was scheduled to attend the service in the upcoming weeks.

Physical & Material Environment:

- The play materials and equipment were stored on low open-fronted shelves which were accessible to the children.
- The pre-school room laid out in a variety of designated interest areas including a home corner, arts and crafts area, construction area and library area, all suitably equipped with a range of supportive play materials and books which facilitated child-led play experiences.
- The environment demonstrated that detailed pre-planning took place in relation to the curriculum. On the day of inspection one of the documented learning themes was spring which was evidenced through art work and models under construction in the service, in the posters and pictures on display, songs sung and books available, and in group discussions which took place between the adults and the children. The registered provider had sourced two real caterpillars and the children demonstrated excitement and knowledge in their discussions as they viewed them on a bed of leaves in their containers, speaking about their life cycle in transforming into butterflies.
- Representations of the children and their learning experiences were very visible in the service as evidenced through the broad range of photographs on display. These included photographs taken indoors and outdoors showing the children playing with kinetic sand, flipping pancakes, painting, engaging in role play activities and playing in the outdoor play area.

- A plentiful supply of books was available in the library area which supported children’s language development. Children were facilitated to rest on a child-sized couch if they wished to relax during the session.
- The outdoor play area located in the registered provider’s garden to the rear of the premises was fully enclosed and mainly surfaced with artificial grass in addition to a paved section. Play materials in the outdoor area included a tray-top sand table and supportive play resources such as a plentiful supply of sand, scoops, a sieve and shovels; an outdoor kitchen with pots and pans; a water table with water wheel; large rubber blocks; a low level slide; ride-on toys, and a wall-mounted blackboard with chalk. A secure shed was available for the storage of the outdoor play equipment.

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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered provider and staff member to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service:

General Safety:

- The door leading into the premises and the door leading from the pre-school room into the registered provider’s family home were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The outdoor play area was secured by the walls of the premises and boundary walls to prevent a child from gaining unsupervised access to the roadway or other source of danger.
- The toys and play equipment available both indoors and outdoors were observed to be maintained in good repair.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.
- The warm water temperature at the wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation was thermostatically controlled and maintained at less than 43°C to facilitate hygienic hand washing without a risk of scalding the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and after messy and outdoor play during the inspection. There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand hygiene at the wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation.
- A refrigerator was available and used to store lunch boxes provided by the parents for the children's snacks. This reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
- The children's tables were observed to be appropriately cleaned prior to and following the morning snack.
- The sanitary accommodation, pre-school room and play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up-to-date cleaning schedules were on display.
- The outdoor wheelie waste bins were stored in a secure area outside, inaccessible to the pre-school children.

Administration of Medication:

- A medication administration record template was available in the service, to be used in the event of a child requiring medication to be administered when in attendance.
- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- A fire drill was conducted during the inspection and the adults and children clearly demonstrated that they were familiar with the procedures being undertaken to safely and promptly evacuate the building and assemble at the fire assembly point which was identified with clear signage in the front garden.

Outings:

- The registered provider demonstrated knowledge of the relevant safety issues associated with the preparation and safe management of outings. For example, a documented risk assessment had been completed recently prior to the children being accompanied by the adults on a flag parade to mark St Patrick's Day on the open green space in front of the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In respect of the staff files maintained for the registered provider and for the staff member, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years, as a period in excess of 3 years had lapsed since these documents were issued.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

General Safety:

Corrective Action

1. The registered provider has updated her Garda vetting through Tusla and has updated the staff member's Garda vetting through the Garda National Vetting Bureau.

Preventive Action

1. A reminder will be set in calendars to renew all staff members' Garda vetting prior to three years.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Confirmation from Tusla's Garda vetting office that a new Garda vetting disclosure has been issued for the registered provider.
- A copy of the staff member's newly updated Garda vetting disclosure.

Summary Comment

The registered provider demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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 and staff member both held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training which ensured that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid box available in the service was suitably equipped and stored in a conspicuous location on the premises and was available for the children in attendance, in the event of an emergency.

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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. A fire drill was carried out on the day of the inspection.
- (b) A record was available in the service showing that the fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 23/10/2024 and a maintenance certificate was available to show that the smoke alarms were serviced on 29/08/2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

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 11 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis. The policy showed that the service was insured until 27/03/2026.