

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH089
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	St. Nicholas N.S. Pre-School
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Wellington Hall, St. Mary's Rd, Townparks, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A91 XH21
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Lorraine McArdle
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	10/09/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	16	PM	No.
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. Flood
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
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### Description of service

St. Nicholas NS Pre-school is a privately owned service that has been in operation in its current location since September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. The service provides sessional care and education to preschool children aged 2-6 years and operates from 9.15am- 12.15pm Monday - Friday. The service caters for a maximum of 22 pre-school children. The service operates from a purposely developed playroom on the ground floor of a community listed building in the centre of Dundalk town. It consists of a playroom and access to an outdoor play area on the premises. Ancillary accommodation includes a sanitary area for the staff and children.

### Staffing

The registered provider and three childcare staff are employed to work directly with the preschool children.

### 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 16.

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 would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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
- (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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge who is also the registered provider, and the deputy person were on the premises when the inspector arrived and were present throughout the inspection.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2) Four staff files including the registered provider, childcare and relief staff were presented for inspection and reviewed. The following documents were available:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written references available for the 4 staff members. Evidence of validations were available for the written references as required.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for all 4 members of staff. The registered provider adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Following a review of the files presented for inspection, international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 4 members of staff who work directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent

### 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 staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.35am and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 16 preschool children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years being cared for by 3 staff members, which included the registered provider.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

#### Compliance Information

(1) The following records were present for inspection and reviewed:

- (a) Documentary evidence was on display in the service containing the names, qualifications and experience of the staff present. In addition, a curriculum vitae was available in the staff files presented for inspection.
- (b) The registration certificate for the service was available in the service.
- (c) Details of the adult: child ratio in the service were on display.
- (d) Documentary evidence was available of curriculum planning, and this was on display in the care room.
- (h) A written record was available of the arrival and departure times for the children attending the service on a daily basis.
- (j) No medication was administered during the inspection. The registered provider confirmed that currently there is no child attending the service who requires regular medication. Parental consent was available for temperature reducing medication should it be required in an emergency.

(k) A sample of 10 accident and incident records from the previous 9 months were reviewed. All records were complete. The records included a parental signature to indicate that they had been informed about the incident and signatures of the staff and registered provider, indicating that they had reviewed the information.

## Non-Compliance Information

(1)(i) The staff rota presented for inspection was considered inadequate. The rota presented was a once off record and ✓ symbols were used beside the staff member's name. It did not give details of the date, start, finish and break times of each staff member in attendance every day.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

There is a new staff rota with start, finish and break-times. The registered provider will ensure that the staff sign in sheet is complete each morning and evening.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of updated staff rota

## Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance together with photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 has been adequately addressed.

### 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

#### Compliance Information

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

#### Basic Needs

- The children's care needs were attended to on a regular basis for example, hands were washed after toileting and noses were wiped frequently. The children were dressed appropriately for going outside to play in the wet weather.
- Independence with toileting was promoted for the children and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle reminders were given about handwashing by the staff.
- Lunches for morning snack, were provided by the parents and consisted of a variety of sandwiches and rolls, crackers, fresh fruit pieces, cheese and yoghurts. Potable drinking water was available, and the children had access to their drink bottles. The children who needed more time to sit and finish their lunch were facilitated.
- The children had a change of environment to the outdoor area where they engaged in a variety of outdoor games and were facilitated to choose what games they played and what story they wanted to read.

#### Supporting Relationships

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and the staff members present. The staff were observed down on the floor with the children and were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. The staff were observed actively engaging with and supporting the children with their activities. Staff sat with the children during story time in the outdoor area and also when the children were engaging in art and tabletop activities during play time. The children actively sought out the staff e.g. one child was heard asking the staff member *"..will you wait with me?... good boy...do you need some help? now handies..good boy"* and then proceeded to sing the handwashing song.

- Verbal feedback was given to parents and guardians at drop off and collection, additionally phone calls, and a small messaging service on social media are also used for communicating with parents.
- Links between the service and home were promoted and evidenced by the presence of ‘learning journals’ which are in development for each child, and these contain samples of the children’s artwork and photographs of activities that are sent home each term and as a ‘keep sake’ at the end of the school year. A variety of pictures, and flags that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children were on display.
- The staff were familiar with strategies and plans were in place to support children who required additional assistance while attending the service.

### 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 and internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the Early Years’ service.
- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- The staff were observed to accompany the children to the gate at collection time.
- The outdoor area was enclosed and is secured with a “buzzer-controlled gate”.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on high shelving and in locked cupboards.

##### Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and paper towels to support effective hand washing practices.
- Perishable food items were appropriately stored in a fridge.
- When questioned the staff were familiar with cleaning procedures in the service which were in accordance with best practice guidelines. Documentary evidence was also available and on display.

### Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that all reasonable measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a preschool child in relation to the following:

#### **Infection Control:**

1. The children's hands were not washed on return to the playroom from outdoor play, which is a cross-infection risk.
2. The nappy changing mat in use in the service was dirty, cracked and had foam exposed. This is an infection control risk.
3. The nappy bin observed for the disposal of soiled nappies in the sanitary area was unsuitable. Disposable nappies should be disposed of in a foot-operated, lined, lidded bin that is leak proof.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective & Preventive Actions**

1. Adequate time will be allowed for hand washing on return to the classroom. Posters on doors to remind the staff and children.
2. A new changing mat has been purchased. Staff will inspect the changing mat at regular intervals.
3. A new nappy bin has been purchased, and it will be reviewed regularly.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographic evidence

### Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have 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 ensured that a person trained in first aid for children was at all times available to the children attending the service. Documentary evidence was available of an up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) qualification for two adults in the service.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid box available in the service was stored in a conspicuous location where they were easily accessible 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 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) A record was maintained of the monthly fire drills which had been completed in the service.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarm on the premises dated the 01/2025 and 11/09/2024 respectively.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises