

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH106				
Name of Service:	Tots & Co Playgroup				
Address of Service:	Fieldstown, Monasterboice, Drogheda, Co. Louth				
Eircode:	A92 ND8N				
Name of Registered Provider:	Patricia Madden				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date(s) of Inspection:	19/06/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>31</td> <td>PM</td> <td>13</td> </tr> </table>	AM	31	PM	13
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & 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

Tots and Co. Playgroup is a privately owned service that has been in operation since September 2000. It provides Sessional, Part-time and Full Day Care services to pre-school children from 2-6 years of age. The service operates from a single storey purpose-built premises consisting of 3 care rooms namely The Pre-ECCE Room, The Junior ECCE Room and The Senior ECCE Room. Ancillary accommodation includes sanitary accommodation, storage, a kitchen area and 2 outdoor play areas.

Staffing

There were 9 staff employed in the service including the registered provider, childcare staff, relief staff, and staff who carry out catering and cleaning duties.

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.

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 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.

(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 who is also the registered provider and a named deputy person to deputise as required. The registered provider was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.40am and the deputy person arrived on the premises at approximately 11.00am. Both were present for the remainder of 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) There were 9 staff files presented for inspection including the registered provider and staff who provide relief cover in the service.

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all 9 members of staff.
- All written references available were validated as required.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all 9 staff members in the service. The service 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 staff files presented on the day of inspection, international police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that all 9 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school children had at least the minimum required Level 5 childcare qualification.

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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2) On the day of inspection there were 3 preschool rooms in operation namely; The Senior ECCE Room, The Junior ECCE Room and The Pre-ECCE Room.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the Inspectors arrived unannounced to the service;

- **The Senior ECCE Room,**

There were 17 preschool children aged 4-5 years with 3 members of staff.

- **The Junior ECCE Room**

There were 10 preschool children aged 3-4 years with 2 members of staff.

- **The Pre-ECCE Room**

There were 4 preschool children aged 2-3 years with 1 member of staff.

An additional member of staff who is also the deputy person in charge arrived on the premises at approximately 11.00am and provided assistance in the care rooms as required and with administrative duties.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children's attendance records the information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises

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:

(g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;

Compliance Information

(1)(g) The Infection Control Policy was available for inspection and included all information as required.

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-

(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

There were 3 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection namely; The Senior ECCE Room, The Junior ECCE Room and The Pre-ECCE Room.

(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:

- Health eating was promoted in the service, and a varied menu was on display. Dinners were provided by an outside cater and reheated by the service cook. The morning and afternoon snacks were also supplied at 3pm and again at 4.30pm. Dinner on the day was chicken curry and rice and was served to the children staying on a full day and part time care basis. Independence was promoted while assistance was also given to the younger children who required it. Consistency of the dinners were observed to be age appropriate throughout all rooms. Additional portions were also provided for children who requested more dinner. While some children brought in snacks from home, a variety of snacks were provided by the service including cold meats, vegetables and fresh fruit. Drinks were available to the children as required and “self-care stations” were available in the care rooms and the children could access their drinks cups/ bottles as needed.

- Independence with self-care was promoted in the care rooms. “Self-care” stations were available, and the children were observed to spontaneously access the nose blowing station and drinks area.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- Sleep needs were facilitated in the service. The Senior and Junior ECCE rooms were converted to sleep areas after dinner time where the children were observed to sleep or to take a rest from activities.
- All children had a change of environment to the outdoor areas and were encouraged to dress appropriately for the hot weather for example in the Pre preschool Room the staff member was observed encouraging the children to wear their sunhats “*would you like to put your hat on, so you don’t get a sore head*”.

Supporting Relationships

- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing interactions by all staff. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children in all the rooms e.g. “*Is everybody thinking of their favourite story ?..*” “*so...what would you like to do...?*”, “*that looks lovely*”. The staff were observed seated at tables, engaged in activities and to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner.
- Staff used an electronic application (an ‘App’) to provide information to parents on their child’s care and daily routine in the service on a daily basis. Information shared included details of each child’s personal care routines such as what they ate, when they slept, nappy changes and play activities. The staff also reported that communication with parents is conducted verbally at collection and drop off and there was a parents notice board with information in the hallway. Newsletters and a small messaging service are also used to share information. The registered provider and deputy person also provided information on the parent feedback forms, where parents share information with the staff on their experiences and suggestions for improvements.
- The staff communicate with each other on a daily basis and also use email and a small messaging service to share information on the children’s care needs, curriculum planning and themed activities. Staff meetings are also reported to take place and support for staff to engage in professional development is also encouraged.

- A plan was in place for a child who required additional supports, and it was observed actively in use throughout the morning to support the child to engage in activities with their peers.

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 front door was appropriately secured when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the premises.
- All emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- Cleaning equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
- The televisions present in the service were wall mounted with no trailing leads observed.

Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and single use paper hand towels available to support effective hand washing in the service.
- Effective hand washing practices were observed during the inspection, after toileting, and outdoor play and prior to snack/dinner time.
- Good environmental cleaning practices were observed during the inspection, with tables being wiped down prior to lunch, snack times and after activities. Staff when questioned were able to verbalise correct cleaning processes for toys and equipment. Documentary evidence of up-to-date cleaning routines and schedules were on display.
- There was a mouthed toy box in the Pre-Preschool Room.
- A supply of gloves and aprons were available for nappy changing.
- Soothers were stored in individual lidded containers in a basket.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute physical safe sleep observations were observed to be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines. These were completed on both the electronic app.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There were unprotected sharp corners on the worktop and on the black and white tables in the Pre-Preschool Room. In addition, there were sharp corners on the white shelving unit and black and white tables in the Junior Preschool Room. These are a potential injury hazard.
2. In the sanitary accommodation off the Junior Preschool Room a bottle of antibacterial spray was observed sitting on the worktop and within access of the children.
3. In the outdoor area at the entry to the grass and gravel area there were some exposed and unprotected concrete blocks which were a potential injury hazard should a child fall against them.
4. The metal strip at the door exiting the Preschool Room into the long corridor was lifting and a potential trip hazard.

Infection Control:

5. The nappy bins in the sanitary accommodations were push down lidded bins and not pedal operated lined, lidded bins as is required. This is an infection control risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. Corner covers have been placed on the shelving units and low-level shelves and worktops. The tables have been replaced and now have rounded corners. The observation of sharp corners has been included on the risk assessment forms for each room.
2. Staff have been reminded that cleaning supplies must be out of reach of children at all times. Staff have now been ensuring the spray bottles are put back on high level shelves after each use. This has been added to the risk assessment for each room to keep it to the forefront of staff minds at all times.
3. The blocks have been covered with a small wooden bench. If any other blocks become exposed, they will be covered for the children's protection.
4. The metal strip has been stuck down and is no longer a tripping hazard. Tripping hazards has been added to the risk assessment forms of each classroom.
5. Nappy bins have been replaced with lidded, pedal operated bins. Nappy bins will always be replaced with pedal operated bins as needed in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Updated risk assessment documents.
- Photographic evidence of outdoor area, repaired metal strip and pedal operated bin.

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 and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence of an up-to-date insurance certificate was available that demonstrated adequate insurance cover for a full day care service and covered 75 children. The certificate reviewed detailed an expiry date of 27/03/2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,

Non-Compliance Information

(d) In the sanitary accommodation off the Junior Preschool Room there was exposed expanding insulating foam around piping in both toilets. This was at a low level and accessible to the preschool child and a health and safety hazard.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Actions

The pipes will be covered in with small wooden boxes so that they will not be accessible to the children. This is planned to be completed before reopening on 26/08/2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of completed works.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Additional information was submitted by email confirming that the works have been completed. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance under Regulation 29 has been addressed.