

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH112
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Name of Service:	Woddlers & Toddlers
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Address of Service:	Knocknagoran, Omeath, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 FK03
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Name of Registered Provider:	Irene Moley
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	21
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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

Woddlers & Toddlers has been operating as a privately owned childcare service in this setting since 2002. The early years' service is registered to cater for a maximum of 50 children. It provides full day care, part-time and sessional care and education to children aged 0 to 6 years and operates from 07.30am to 6.00pm each weekday. The service operates from a purpose-built premises on the grounds of the registered provider's home in Omeath, Co. Louth. There are currently 3 care rooms in operation on the premises namely; The Baby Room and The Woddlers Room which are located on the first floor and the Pre-school Room which is located on the ground floor. Ancillary accommodation consists of a separate sleep room, sanitary areas, a kitchen, an office, and storage areas. The children also have access to a developed outdoor play area to the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

There are 17 staff employed in the service. The registered provider and 15 childcare staff work directly with the preschool children, and 1 staff member is employed to work with the school aged 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.

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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1)(a) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and a system in place to designate a named deputy person to deputise as required.

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

(2) 17 staff files were presented for inspection and reviewed.

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all 17 members of staff including the registered provider.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 17 staff members and 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 for inspection, international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 16 members of staff, including the registered provider, who worked directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification.

(7) Following a discussion with the registered provider and staff, evidence was available that staff training had taken place in the service. The inspectors were informed that all new employees received a copy of the services policies and procedures, subsequently staff are required to confirm in writing that they have reviewed the

documents. The registered provider and deputy person also confirmed that there are plans for additional staff training next week, as the policy and procedures documents are currently being updated.

The staff files reviewed included evidence of supervision and support records for all employees. Additional training certificates were also available on file.

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 were an adequate number of adults working directly at all times with the children attending the early years' service.

(2) When the inspectors arrived for an unannounced inspection, the adult to child ratios were correct.

The following adult to child ratios were observed on the day of inspection.

- In the Preschool Room there were 9 children aged between 3 – 5 years being cared for by 3 staff members. (Three school age children were also present in this room).
- In the Baby Room there were 6 preschool children aged 7 months – 1 year and 11 months with 2 staff.
- In the Toddler Room there were 8 children aged 1 year and 10 months – 3 years with 2 staff members

One staff member was also present providing relief in the care rooms for nappy changing and staff breaks. A 2nd staff member arrived on the premises at 10.30am and also provided assistance in the care rooms.

The registered provider and deputy person were also present throughout the inspection.

(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 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

There were 3 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection namely The Preschool Room, The Baby Room and Toddler 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:

- The children had free movement in the care rooms and all children had periods of time in the outside areas.
- The main meal was provided by an outside caterer and reheated by the service. Some children in the Baby Room brought in their own dinners which were also reheated. The children in the Baby Room had mashed potatoes and gravy while the children in the other 2 rooms had pasta bolognaise. Assistance was given to children who required feeding and the children were afforded plenty of time to finish their food. Staff sat with the children while they were eating. Dinner portions and consistency were appropriate to the stage of development of the children in each room. Some children brought in their lunches and snacks from home and perishable items were appropriately stored in the fridge. A menu was on display in the hallway for parents to view. Information relating to cultural and dietary restrictions was also on display in the service.
- The children had access to their drinks cups and bottles as required. Jugs of water and cups were also brought outside when the children when playing in the outdoor area.
- All children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting, step ups were provided. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required as the children were brought to the sanitary accommodation. Gentle handwashing reminders were given to the children after toileting.

- In the Baby Room and Toddler Room nappies were checked and changed promptly with the staff members observed to ask the child could they check their nappy and take them for nappy changing. Pleasant interactions between the staff member and children were observed during nappy changing.
- Handwashing was also encouraged after being outside and before lunchtime.
- Behavioural issues were dealt with swiftly and not allowed to escalate for example in the Toddler Room staff assisted with minor disagreements with *"that's ok we can share"*, *"we have to be nice"*, *"you're all my helpers today"* and *"would you like to sit beside me??"*

Supporting relationship around children

- The staff were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, plus positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff members for example *"can I check your nappy please?"*, *"good girl, "I love your sticker"* and *"take a bow I am so proud of you"*. The children were observed to actively seek out the staff.
- Communication between the parents and staff was informal at drop off and pick-up. A written "Daily Record" has recently commenced in the service. This record was completed on each child in the Baby Room and the younger children attending the Toddler Room to inform the parents of their child's food intake, nappy changes and sleep. The registered provider and staff also reported that phone calls, email and a small messaging service are also used to share information with parents. Newsletters are sent out regularly to share information with parents about activities and upcoming events in the service. Scrap books are collated for each child in the service and provide a collection of photographs, art work, activities and development observations. Information relating to the services policies and procedures are included on the children's enrolment forms and a copy is also available in the entrance hallway for parents to access.
- The registered provider and deputy person reported regular meetings with staff members to plan and discuss care practices and activities in the care rooms. A small messaging service and email are also used to share information amongst staff.

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)

- There were comfortable areas within all the care rooms such as floor matting and soft furnishings including a soft ball pit in the Baby Room. In the Toddler Room there was a cosy area in an alcove that was also the reading area with cushions, a mat and darkened walls. In the Preschool Room there was a soft reading and relaxation loft area where the children were observed to spontaneously sit and read a book. One of the staff members was observed to also sit in the area and to read a story to the children when they requested.
- A number of day beds were available for those children who required a rest or sleep, and these were set up in the preschool room after lunch.
- A separate cot room on the ground floor was available and divided into 2 areas; the back room which contained 3 standard cots and the larger front area which contained 6 standard cots.

(3) (a) There was an enclosed outdoor area to the rear of the premises which was divided into 3 areas all of which had a covered area. All areas were secured, fenced and gated.

- The Baby area consisted of a foam matting surface with a selection of age-appropriate toys and equipment.
- The Toddler area and Preschool area both consisted of a tarmacked area and an area partially covered with an artificial grass surface. There were tables and chairs available to carry out tabletop and art activities, some ride on toys, baby dolls and buggies, gravel pits for digging and play, a plastic tray for sensory play and a musical wall. The children were also able to bring additional toys out from the care room.

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 ensured that the following measures were implemented so as to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The outdoor play areas were secured and gated.
- The entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- All emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- Highchairs were in good condition and fitted with safety harnesses.
- Cleaning agents were stored up high safely out of the reach of children

Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of liquid soap and paper towels available in the service to support effective handwashing practices.
- Staff were observed to wear appropriate disposable gloves and aprons when changing nappies and to dispose of appropriately after each nappy change.
- Lunches/ dinners brought in from home were observed to be appropriately stored in the fridge.
- Individual lidded containers were available for the storage of each child's soother.
- Staff reported that any bottles of formula were brought in made-up by the parents and stored appropriately in the fridge.
- In the Toddler Room mouthed toys were observed to be removed after use and put into a basin of soapy water.
- Good environmental practices were observed, tabletops were cleaned down after play and before and after lunches.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute physical safe sleep observations were observed to be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines and were documented appropriately.
- Staff were present settling the children to sleep in the cot room and preschool sleep area and remained in the rooms while all children were asleep.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service. The following observations were made:

Infection Control:

The following infection control issues were observed during inspection:

1. When the inspectors checked the hot water at 10.30am it was cold. This went unnoticed by the staff present in the service until they were informed by the inspectors. Additionally, it was not identified on the morning checklist.
2. The children's hands were not observed to be washed after nappy changing.
3. The nappy changing mat was not wiped down after each nappy change.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

- We have reviewed and updated our risk assessment check sheets to include "No hot water". All staff have been made aware of the updated risk assessment check sheets and will continue to do daily checks to ensure hot water is available at all times.
- During our Monthly staff meeting our Nappy changing policy has been communicated to all staff members which includes that "children's hands are to be washed after nappy changing" and that "the changing mat is to be wiped down after each nappy change". All staff will continue to be trained in the implementation of all policies and procedures to ensure they are being carried out appropriately. This takes place once a month during staff meetings.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of revised risk assessment checklist.

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 addressed.

Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will be assessed at the next inspection.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The complaints policy was available for inspection and was found to include the following requirements:

- (a) The procedures to be followed by person making a complaint in relation to the service.
- (b) The manner in which the complaint shall be dealt with
- (c) The procedures for keeping a complainant informed about how the complaint is being dealt with.

When questioned staff were familiar with the policy and demonstrated an understanding of their role and responsibility in relation to the implementation of the complaints policy.

(3)(a & b) Documentary evidence was available for inspection of how the service dealt with a recent complaint which was made in accordance with the services complaints policy and procedure.