

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015LK178

**Name of Service:** Thumbelinas Creche

**Address of Service:** Glencarragh, South Circular Road, Limerick, Co. Limerick

**Eircode:** V94K519.

**Name of Registered Provider:** Margaret Lane

**Service type:** Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

**Date of Inspection:** 15/01/2025

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	35	PM	32
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**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Tusla Early Years Inspection Service,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Estuary House,  
Henry Street,  
Limerick.

**Inspection undertaken by:** M Riordan

**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

Thumbelinas is a private early year's care and education facility located in an urban area, close to the centre of Limerick city. Operating since 1995, it serves children aged 1 to 6 years with full-time, part-time, and sessional options. The facility offers services from 8.00 am to 5:30 pm, with ECCE Scheme sessions each morning. The service occupies the ground floor and first floor of a converted home, featuring a Toddler room, a Preschool room, a junior Montessori room and a senior Montessori room, a room for school aged children, a kitchen, sanitary facilities, and a dedicated sleep room. It also has an outdoor play area to the front of the premises

### Staffing

The service is jointly owned and managed by 3 adults, each of whom work each day at the facility. There are an additional 11 staff employed to work at the service. Each staff member has the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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/ premises and facilities. 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, persons 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) There is a designated person in charge to manage the service daily. A named person to deputise in the absence of the joint managers was available if required.

(b) The manager or their deputy were rostered on duty each day.

(2)(a) There were 2 written and validated references available in respect of all adults working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, references from an alternative source such as previous schools and colleges were provided.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. All vetting disclosures were dated within the last 3 years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 3 staff members working at the service who has resided outside the jurisdiction for a period in excess of 6 consecutive months.

(4) All staff working with the children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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.*

## Compliance Information

- (1) The service managers ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times.
- (2) The correct adult child ratios were maintained throughout each room on the day of the inspection.
- There were 2 adults caring for the 7 preschool children in the Toddler room.
- There were 2 adults caring for the 7 preschool children in the Preschool room.
- There were 3 adults caring for the 9 preschool children in the Junior Montessori room.
- There were 2 adults caring for the 12 preschool children in the Senior Montessori room.
- A 3<sup>rd</sup> adult was available in the Toddler room to assist during busy periods. Relief staff were available if required.
- An additional staff member was available to prepare, cook and serve food at 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

## Compliance Information

### Basic Needs:

There was a Healthy Eating Policy in place at the facility. Meals followed the procedures outlined in the service's policy, with a morning snack and dinner provided each day. A 2-week menu plan was available and shared with all parents. A copy of the plan was displayed on the main kitchen door for parents to view. Snacks included fruit, sandwiches, pancakes, yogurt, cheese, and crackers, while main meals listed on the menu plan consisted of spaghetti bolognese, chicken supreme, pork sausages, bacon and turnip, and chicken curry and rice. Perishable foods and snacks provided by the parents for the afternoon meal break were stored in a fridge, and children's drinks were kept accessible throughout the day.

Nappy changing facilities were located close to both preschool rooms on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, with hygienic provisions like liquid soap, paper towels, and foot-operated, lidded bins for waste disposal accessible.

Children could independently access toilets close to both Montessori rooms downstairs, with staff supervision available close by while children were using the facility. All toilet areas were ventilated with openable windows.

Rest areas in each room had armchairs, soft floor mats, cushions, and books, while a separate sleep room with 6 cots were provided for children who need to sleep during the day. Low level beds were available for the older children if required.

### **Physical and Material Environment:**

Each care room in the service was organised with distinct interest areas to support children's learning and development. Low level open shelving units in all rooms were well stocked with age-appropriate play materials and equipment. These were all labelled, were easily visible and easily accessible. The materials included fine motor development tools like peg boards and threading, cognitive development resources such as puzzles and construction materials, and language development activities like storytelling and social conversation were included in the activities. Children used age-appropriate low-level tables and chairs during snack time and table top activities. In the Toddler room materials were stored in accessible baskets on low-level shelving, allowing children to easily reach and interact with resources.

In each room the walls were decorated with themed artwork and educational posters displayed at children's eye level. The date of each child's birthday was displayed along with family photos.

The outdoor play area at the front of the premises was well-resourced with a variety of play materials. The area was covered with synthetic grass and rubber matting to minimise injury risks. Children could engage in imaginative play with mud kitchens, pots, and pans, while ride-on toys, bikes and trikes were available for active play. Low-level slides and climbing frames supported the development of gross motor skills. Outdoor seating allowed children to work and dine outside during favourable weather. An outdoor shed was available for the safe storage of all outdoor toys.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Basic Needs:

1. The children in the Toddler room did not have daily opportunities for change of environments and they spend long periods each day in the same space. This lack of variety could lead to boredom, frustration, and limited development of gross motor skills like coordination and balance. Making use of all vacant space within the premises at all times during the day could offer the change of environment required.

#### Physical and Material Environment:

2. There was insufficient amount of play materials indoors to encourage gross motor development for the Toddler age group. There were limited tunnels and climbing structures that encourage physical activity and sensory exploration. Equipment/materials, e.g. obstacle courses that toddlers could navigate, to enhance their coordination, balance and motor skills were not available.

3. Children's time outdoors was weather dependent. There was no sheltered area outside which would allow children engage in outdoor play on rainy or windy days. Having access to more environment changes would alleviate boredom for children who are indoors for prolonged periods.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Outlined in the corrective action report was a detailed plan of how children with their key workers now move to various different spaces indoors and outdoors and experiencing different play opportunities during each day.
2. Additional equipment to encourage and enhance children's gross motor development were purchased for the service.
3. Work has commenced on planning and developing a sheltered outdoor area for children to ensure their time outside is not weather dependent.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the new equipment purchased for the service was submitted to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

### 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

##### General Safety:

All low level windows on the 1st floor of the service had restrictive opening devices in place. There were no window curtain or blind cords accessible to the children. A suitable handrail was provided on the stairs. The staircase was adequately lit, and the stair floor-covering was in good condition and non-slip.

All highchairs were in good condition and fitted with safety harnesses.

All toys and play equipment were safe for the age group using them, in good condition, free from pinch and crush points or sharp edges.

There were no flexes or cables stored within reach of children.

All cleaning agents were stored well out of range of children.

The outdoor space was adequately fenced to prevent a preschool child gaining unsupervised exit outside this area of the service.

##### Infection Control:

Nappy changing procedures were clearly displayed close to all nappy changing units. Foot pedal operated, lidded bins were available to ensure the safe storage of all soiled nappies. Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were available at all sinks to ensure hygienic hand washing took place at the service.

##### Safe Sleep:

Children were closely monitored while sleeping in the designated sleep room. A staff member checked children every 10 minutes and all checks were documented in writing. Staff were aware of their safe sleep policy and all procedures outlined in the policy were followed.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. All internal doors were not appropriately secured where necessary to prevent children accessing any unsafe areas in the building. The handle of the door in the Toddler room was within easy reach of the children. On the day of the inspection the stair gate outside the Toddler room which was in place to prevent children accessing the stairs remained open. This posed a safety risk to the children in this room.

### Infection Control:

2. The mattresses in each cot in the sleep room did not have waterproof protectors in place. This posed a risk of cross infection. All mattresses are required to have waterproof coverings fitted.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. In the corrective action plan the registered provider stated that staff have been reminded about their responsibilities to ensure the safety of children in the toddler room on the 1st floor. The stair gate at the top of the stairs is monitored by management at the service throughout each day ensuring that it is closed at all times.

#### Infection Control:

2. Waterproof mattresses protectors were purchased and fitted on all cot mattresses in the service.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the aforementioned changes were forwarded to the office of the Early Years inspectorate.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The registered providers have a current insurance certificate which outlines that adequate insurance is available for up to 65 preschool children to attend the service. The insurance cover commenced on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 and is due to expire on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2025.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

#### Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The outdoor area is surrounded by a high fence and was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service. Staff are outdoors at all times supervising the children while playing outside.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) Routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, wash hand basins and nappy changing areas available in the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (b)
  1. Secure access to the service must be provided. On the day of the inspection the front door of the service remained opened for long periods of the day with a bin against the door holding it open. This was to facilitate staff and children accessing and leaving the outdoor play area. The gate entrance at the road had a handle located above the height of a child but was unlocked.

To ensure the safety of all children on the premises, a system must be in place at the entrance to the premises to ensure any person entering the creche is always checked in by a staff member.

- (d)
2. The adult couches in each room were worn and some had areas where the covers were torn. To ensure a high standard of cleanliness in the service, all furnishings need to be a proper state of repair and easily cleanable.
  3. Throughout the premises the paintwork has signs of wear and tear. Pain was chipping on many of the walls throughout the building.
  4. The natural grassed area in the outdoor play space was not maintained and available for the children to use. The grass was high and needed to be cut. The pots used for planting were full of dirty, stagnant water.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A keypad security system was fitted at the front door of the service on both the inside and the outside.
2. New couches were purchased for each room in the service.
3. A plan for the repainting of all rooms in the service was submitted with dates arranged for the refurbishments.
4. The grassed area outdoors was cut, the area cleaned, and all pots replanted.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of all changes were submitted in the corrective action plan. Receipts were also forwarded for the new furniture purchases.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.