

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK182
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Name of Service:	Tiny Friends Creche
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Address of Service:	Old School House, Mungret, Limerick, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 A270
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Healy
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	23/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	46	PM	30
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne
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).

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Description of service

This privately owned pre-school was opened in 2013. The service offers full day care and part time care provision from 07.30hrs to 18:15hrs. It also offers an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school programme and a sessional care programme from 09.00hrs to 12.00hrs. The service is aimed at children in the 0 to 6 years age group. The pre-school caters for a maximum number of 64 pre-school children at any one time.

The service also provides care for school aged children from 13.30hrs to 18.15hrs Monday to Friday and during primary school holidays.

The premises are on its own grounds located in a residential area, a short distance from Limerick city.

The preschool children have access to 5 care rooms, 2 dedicated sleep rooms, nappy changing and sanitary facilities and outdoor play areas to the rear and back of the facility.

Designated sanitary facilities are available for the adults.

Staffing

A total of 14 staff are working in the service and this included the manager and the supervisor.

On the day of the inspection there were 9 childcare staff (including the 2-management staff) working with the preschool children and an additional 2 staff available for kitchen duties/ cleaning.

The registered provider does not work with the preschool children in the 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

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- 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.

Regulation 8

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) (3)(4)

Regulation 11 (1)(2)

Regulation 19 (1)(a)

Regulation 23

Regulation 25

Regulation 29

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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not notify the Early Years inspectorate within the specified timeframe of 60 days of the following changes identified on the day of the inspection in relation to the preschool service.

- 1.The change in the name of the designated person in charge.
- 2.The change in the closing hours of operation for the preschool service from 18:15 pm to 17:30 pm.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action: The registered provider has submitted a change of circumstances for the following:

- 1.The change in the name of the designated person in charge.
- 2.The change in the closing hours of the operation for the preschool service.

Supporting documentation submitted

An email was submitted to confirm that the required changes have been accepted and approved by the Early years inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The evidence was submitted and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement of Regulation 8(1).

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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) There was a named person appointed by the registered provider as the person in charge and a deputy available in the service.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the person in charge and the deputy were present, and the staff roster indicated that these persons were always available on the premises.

(c) There was a clear management structure that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the management team.

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- (2) The files of 5 new staff members employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 5th of December 2024 were viewed on the day of the inspection.
- (a) There were 7 written and validated references available for the staff members from their previous employers on file in the service.
- (b) There were 3 written and validated references available from sources other the previous employers on file in the service.
- (c) The Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were reviewed and available for the all-staff members employed to work at the service. The Garda vetting for the staff was dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting.
- (d) Police vetting was available for 2 staff members who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4) The staff working directly with the children attending the service held awards in early childhood care and education at levels 5 and 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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) On the day of the inspection there were 9 staff (including the person in charge and a relief staff) working across 5 care rooms with 46 preschool children present in the morning and 30 children present in the afternoon.
- (2) During the period of inspection, the minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained and an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children in each care room.
- Wobbler room – There were 3 children (1-15months) and 1 staff.
 - Toddler room – There were 5 children (1-2yrs) and 1 staff.
 - Preschool Room – There were 6 children(2-3yrs) and 1 staff.

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- Sessional Montessori Room - There were 16 children(3-4yrs) and 2 staff.
- Montessori Room - There were 16 children(3-5yrs) and 2 staff.

Additional staff were available for the kitchen and cleaning duties.

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

Relationship and Interactions around children:

The service supports children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with the staff members.

There was a key person assigned to each child. The staff knew each child individually by name, their likes, dislikes and interest. When talking to the children they got down to their level and were observed making eye contact.

They were observed listening to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, their feelings and thoughts and their experiences both verbally and non-verbally by reading the children's cues, gestures and body language.

The staff were observed to respond to the children's cues for assistance in a prompt and sensitive manner. The staff were positive in their communication with the children, using soft tones of voice and listening to the children in a caring and positive way. When a child got upset or tired they were observed offering comfort and nurture. There were many opportunities for small and large group activities and play, to support children working together on different tasks, eating and playing together and to recognise and accept their differences and similarities.

Physical and Material Environment:

Rooms throughout the service were designed for different age groups and abilities. The Wobbler room was designed to facilitate lots of floor play and had soft flooring, and sensory toys. The Toddler room had soft seating for children to relax and rest when tired. Low level tables and chairs were used for many tabletop activities and for dining at mealtimes.

The Preschool rooms and the Montessori rooms were spacious, with low-level shelves displaying toys. Defined areas included library corners, construction zones, imaginative play areas, and sensory play such as painting,

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colouring and homemade play dough. Children's personal belongings were stored in labelled shelves where they could access them during the day if needed.

The outdoor space had a sheltered area with climbing frames, playhouses, bikes and trikes, allowing play in most weather conditions.

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

Infection Control:

There was adequate hot and cold running water in the service on the day for the effective washing of hands and other requirements to reduce the risk of infection.

This was an issue identified on the last inspection.

Safe Sleep:

The two cot mattresses in the baby sleep room were replaced with new mattresses that complied with the required safety standards.

All eight mattresses in the cot room were in good condition and all had the required mattress protectors.

Fire Safety:

All the fire exit door leading from the hallway and playrooms were clear and not obstructed to comply with Fire safety requirements.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following issue was identified as posing a potential safety risk to the preschool children while playing in the grassy area of the playground.

- Two metal goals in the playing field which were not anchored securely and safely to the ground. This was brought to the attention of the person in charge who confirmed that this safety issue would be attended to within 24 hrs.

Photographic evidence of the required safety work was submitted to the Early Years inspectorate to demonstrate that the 2-goal post were anchored to the ground within the agreed timeframe.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action:

The registered provider has stated in the corrective and preventive form (CAPA) that:

General Safety: The goals were anchored and secured within the correct timeframe allowed by early years inspectorate. Goals will be checked at the end of each day to make sure they are safe and secure.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety: Photographic evidence of the above action submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was deemed satisfactory to meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 23 Safety.

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 had ensured that two staff held current certification in First Aid Response (FAR) for children with one staff having completed FAR training.
- (2)(a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes safely stored and easily accessible in the service.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to the children while attending the service.

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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 premises appeared to be a sound and stable structure and there were no visible defects.
- (b) The entrance and exit doors were secure to prevent children from exiting and to prevent unauthorised access.
- (c) Heating, ventilation and lighting were adequate in each area of the facility.
- (e) Suitable sanitary facilities were available for both staff and children.
Hygienic hand washing and drying facilities were available.
Hygienic nappy changing facilities were available.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) The following areas in the outdoor areas were found to be poorly maintained and repaired with no cleaning/ maintenance records available to demonstrate that these areas were cleaned and maintained routinely on a weekly/ monthly basis.
- The all-weather ground surface areas were unclean with leaves and mud from the ground surface and trees of the larger outdoor area.
 - The larger outdoor area had a section with dry earth where pieces of rocks were visible. This section had no additional covering to maintain the area for the children to play that's unique to the outdoors.
 - There was a large stagnant pool of water with leaves underneath the swings making it difficult for the children to use.
 - The latch on the shed door was broken and the door was in need of maintenance.
 - Two manholes were protruding from the grassy area.
 - The children's play equipment and materials was dirty with mud and bird excrement.

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- Broken toys were not removed and were left in open and damaged bins which were full of leaves and stagnant water.

The above issues were identified as posing a potential risk to the preschool children while playing in the outdoor areas and to their physical wellbeing and development.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action: The registered provider has stated in the corrective and preventive form (CAPA) that the following actions have taken place:

The all-weather area was powerhouse and cleaned of leaves and mud.

Large rocks were removed from outdoor play area and bark ordered from landscaper evergreen landscapes.

The leaves and mud was removed from swing area and soil with sand was used to fill in the large holes.

The latch on shed door replaced.

The manholes have now covered.

The outdoor play area cleaned weekly and chairs and tables daily.

A skip was ordered and all broken toys have now been disposed of and new toys have been purchased.

Regular power hosing and check of broken toys and weekly cleaning sheet for outdoor have been put in place.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the above actions submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was deemed satisfactory to meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 29 (d).