

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LK189
<b>Name of Service:</b>	TreeTops Early Years Care Ltd
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Sunglen Old Pallas Pallasgreen Co. Limerick
<b>Eircode:</b>	V94EF43
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Tracey Hourigan
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	04/02/2025
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM 45 PM 27
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate 2nd Floor Estuary House Henry Street Limerick
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	J Ryan
<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).

### Conditions if applicable

Not applicable

### Description of service

Tree Tops Montessori school is a privately owned, full day care pre-school service. It operates from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. It provides a breakfast club each morning at 8am and an early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme from 9.00am to 12.30pm. A service for school aged children is provided each evening. The service operates from a purpose-built premises. It has 3 pre-school rooms, a kitchen and a manager's office. There are sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities located adjacent to the rooms. The childcare rooms open directly onto a well-resourced outdoor play area located to the side, front and back of the building.

### Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge and works on site each day. There are 15 staff employed at the service which includes the registered provider, administrative staff and kitchen staff. All staff working directly with the children have the required qualifications in early childhood care and education. Staff engage regularly in ongoing training and professional development.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,23,24,25,26 and 28.

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, person 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
- (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) On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge of operating the service and there was a named person available who was able to deputise as required.

(b) During the period of the inspection the person in charge was available at all times. The staff roster indicated that either the registered provider or the deputy manager were always accessible on site.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the specific roles and responsibilities of each staff member. Team Leaders were appointed in each of the three playrooms.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references from past employers were available for all staff.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff employed at the service. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was not required for any staff member employed in the service as no staff member had lived outside of the jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3) Vetting procedures for all staff were completed before staff commenced working in the service or had contact with children.

(4) All adults working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in early childhood care and education.

## Part III – Management and Staff

### Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

*(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

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 45 pre-school children and 9 adults on the premises for the morning sessional service. In the afternoon there were 27 preschool children present and 5 staff. At all times the written staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in all areas of the service as follows:

Green Room - There was 19 children (2.5 – 3 years) and 3 staff present.

Red Room - There were 20 children (3- 4 years) and 3 staff present.

Yellow Room - There were 6 children (2- 2.5 years) and 1 staff present.

Additional staff were available to cover for staff breaks, office management and kitchen 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

##### **(1)(a) BASIC NEEDS:**

Healthy eating was promoted in the service. Nutritious hot meals and snacks were prepared fresh and served to the children throughout the day. Breakfast if required, lunch, dinner and an afternoon snack were served to the children who attended for the full day care service. Drinking water and cups were accessible to children in each of the rooms.

Sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities were located next to the preschool rooms. Nappy changing supplies were within arm's reach of the changing unit. The privacy and dignity of each child was respected at all times in this area of the service. Each room had a supply of tissues and wipes within easy reach of the children. Lidded bins were accessible for the safe disposal of waste.

Rest areas with soft furnishings were accessible in each of the rooms. Staff throughout the service encouraged quiet periods during the day to facilitate each child's need for comfort, rest and relaxation. Stackable beds were available for children greater than 2 years of age who required a sleep at the service.

A sheltered area was provided outside for the children allowing them to access the playground in all weather. A natural garden space outside facilitated a space for fun and exploration. Staff were observed to interact very well with all the children in their care, speaking in low tones of voice, responding to the children and allowing them plenty of choice relating to playing, games and outdoor activities.

##### **PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:**

The physical and the material environments of each room in the service was carefully planned and designed with activities which were aimed at developing social, emotional, cognitive, physical and interactive skills. There were well developed interest areas in each room with construction play, imaginative play, messy play and sensorial play activities facilitated. Soft comfortable seating was available close to each library area. Toys and equipment were rotated, and internal spaces and interest areas redesigned depending on each child's preferences, interests and abilities.

In the green room children were observed to enjoy playing at the tuft tray which was filled with pink coloured rice and red heart shaped pieces of paper in preparation for valentines day.

Another group of children were seated at a table playing with coloured pasta shapes and a boy who choose to play on his own was seated at a table playing with blocks. A weekly planner was displayed and a community wall display showed buildings and areas of interest in the community.

In the red room children were observed to enjoy a cutting and gluing activity making heart shapes for Valentine's day and which supported the development of their fine motor skills.

Each of the three rooms were clean and well-ventilated as windows were open to allow fresh air to circulate.

Natural open ended play materials such as seashells, stones, pebbles and timber blocks were available. Children had opportunities to spend long periods of time outside in all weather conditions. Each outdoor area was an extension of the well-planned indoor area and was linked with the learning that goes on inside. Opportunities to develop gross motor skills were facilitated outdoors on the play equipment and climbing frames in the natural garden. Mud kitchens provided opportunity for imaginative play. Picnic benches, planting areas and ride on toys provided additional facilities for play.

### 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.*

#### Non- Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for all staff members on the staff roster, however the vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the early years inspectorate regulatory notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

#### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

A copy of updated garda vetting was forwarded to the early years inspectorate.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

##### General Safety:

A template document for garda vetting renewals has been placed on file.

#### Summary Comment

The actions as stated by the registered provider have met the requirements of regulation 23.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*

*(a) no person other than-*

*(i) pre-school child attending the service,*

*(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*

*(iii) an employee, or*

*(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*

*(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

### Compliance Information

(1) Each child who attended the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member on a childcare app on arrival and on departure.

(3)(a) No persons other than the following could enter the service without being approved by a staff member

(i) A pre-school child attending the service.

(ii) A person dropping or collecting such a child.

(iii) An employee.

(iv) An unpaid worker.

(b) A visitor book was maintained which recorded the name of every adult who entered the service, the time they spent in the service, the reason they entered, contact phone numbers and the person who allowed them to enter.

### 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) Four staff members held current certification in first aid responder for children. A staff member certified in first aid responder was at all times available in the service while the service was operational.
- (2)(a) A first aid box was stored in the kitchen and in each playroom.
- (b) The first aid box was available at all times if required by a child.

### 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 fire fighting 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) The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place in December 2024.
- (b) The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis. The maintenance record demonstrated that the firefighting equipment were last service in October 2024. The smoke alarm system was serviced in December 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed each playroom and the hallway outside the playrooms.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available to cover the number of children who attended and had an expiry date of 27/03/2025.