

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LS002
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Sandra's Playschool
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Clonincurragh, Mountrath, Co. Laois
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<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 VHF6
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Sandra Timmons
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	15/05/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	19	PM	Not applicable
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35K1W4
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	A Spain
<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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.
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### Description of service

Sandra's Playschool is a sessional service offering the ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) programme to children aged two to six years. The privately run service is located in a converted old farm building in a rural part of north Laois. Rooms in the service include a playroom with separate sanitary accommodation for both children in attendance and adults off the playroom. A secure outdoor play area is provided at the back of the service. Entrance is from an enclosed yard area at the front of the premises. Parking for the service is located in a side area outside of the entrance yard.

### Staffing

The service is staffed by three staff members. The registered provider also works directly 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
- 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:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment,

Regulation 11 – Staffing levels,

Regulation 19 – Health, welfare and development of child,  
Regulation 23 – Safeguard health, safety and welfare of child,  
Regulation 25 – First aid,  
Regulation 26 – Fire safety measures,  
Regulation 27 – Supervision,  
Regulation 28 – Insurance.

The scope of the inspection included the rooms in use, the outdoor area and the entrance yard way.

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, 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)

The service had both a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

Both the designated person in charge and the named person to deputise were present in the service upon arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

The registered provider and staff present were observed to have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities as they ensured the children’s care needs were met in a safe environment.

(2)(a)(b)

Two references from a past employer were held on file in respect of one staff member. Two references from a source other than a past employer were held on file in respect of one staff member. A reference from a past employer and a reference from a reputable source were held on file in respect of the remaining two staff members.

(c)

A Garda vetting disclosure was held on file in respect of all four staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in respect of all staff.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as none of the staff had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as adults.

(3)

Records confirmed that the necessary vetting procedures were conducted prior to appointment of staff to work in the service.

(4)

Records were available to confirm that the four staff held qualifications in Early childhood care and Education varying from level 5 to level 6.

### 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.*

*(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

### Compliance Information

- (1)  
An adequate number of staff were working directly with the children in attendance as four staff members cared for 19 children in the age range 2 years 8 months to 5 years on arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the sessional service.
- (3)  
The inspector reviewed the children's attendance records and the staff roster for the week beginning 10 March 2025. Records confirmed that the maximum number of children in daily attendance was 21 children with four staff members present daily.

### 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)  
A relaxed atmosphere was prevalent in the service. Children were sitting at tables and were engaged in colouring activities when the inspector arrived at the service. Staff were observed to move between tables and talk to children about the pictures they were colouring. Before lunch, going outdoors to play was signposted in advance by staff and children were observed to line up with friends and move outdoors at their own pace. Children were observed driving the toy tractors and cars, digging in the sandbox with shovels and spoons, playing on the timber boat house and on the slides. Play was child directed with adults chatting to the children and allowing the children to play together and enjoy the freedom of outdoor physical play. Staff were observed to be mindful of a child's need to sit and relax outdoors and after a period of rest, supported the child to play with a small wheel along toy alongside peers.
- Children were observed washing their hands under supervision both before lunch and after using the toilet. Children sat at low-level tables and chairs and enjoyed sandwiches, crackers, yoghurts, and fresh fruit, including bananas, strawberries, apple pieces, and cut grapes, provided by their parents and guardians. Children had free access to their beakers of water also provided from home. Break time was social as children sat and enjoyed

leisurely conversations with their friends. Children were allowed to sit and finish eating at their own pace while supported by staff as necessary to place their lunch boxes in their individual storage shelves to take home. Low level seating and cushions were provided in the playroom for children to take a break from activities and rest as necessary. The low level seating in the outdoor pergola offered a suitable area for children to relax and rest outdoors.

The staff and children were observed to take advantage of the warm weather on the day of inspection. Children were observed reconvening in the outdoor play area following lunch under the supervision of the staff members. Staff were observed to engage with the children as they played outdoors. Children and staff sat in the shelter and sang songs to music and sat in a group setting for story time before home time.

In addition to a daily handover when parents arrived and allowing children to take home art work on request, individual children's folders were maintained in the service for take home at year end. The folders had samples of activities the children undertook including how festive days were recognised in the service. Children's comments and staff observations were also noted in the folders.

The registered provider advised the inspector that parents and guardians were invited to visit and view the service at an open day , receive information on the service to have any queries on service provision 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:

The front door entrance to the service was secured when the inspector arrived at the service. A door bell was provided to alert the service and facilitate entry to the service. The boundaries of the entrance yard way were secured with high level timber fencing, outbuilding walls and the front wall of the service to guard against unauthorised access to the service property.

Cleaning agents in use in the service were stored on high level shelving in the lobby area off the playroom. An open shelter was available off the outdoor play area to store toys and play equipment not in constant and everyday use and to facilitate free floor space for children to play floor games in the playroom. The outdoor play area was safely and securely fenced in by three high level concrete walls and the back wall of the premises.

##### Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and disposable paper towels were provided adjacent to the two wash hand basins allocated for use by children in the children's toilet area. A separate wash hand basin was available in the playroom for children to wash their hands after messy play and as necessary. Open low level boxes labelled with the children's names and with pictures of the children were positioned on low level open shelving in the playroom to store children's bags and coats in an area off the floor to facilitate cleaning. Staff were observed to clean tables before and after break time in the service and to sweep the floor when children returned to the outdoor play area after break time. The painted walls and floor linoleum throughout the premises were observed to be clean and well maintained on the day of inspection. The windows in the playroom which were open for the duration of the inspection, ensured a good supply of fresh air when children played indoors.

**Administration of Medication:**

No medication was administered to children on the day of inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available in the playroom. The registered provider held records as provided on enrolment of children to confirm parental agreement to administer temperature reducing medication in the case of an emergency.

**Fire Safety:**

Fire exit signs were posted over the front door leading to the playroom and the back door leading from the playroom to the outdoor play area. When queried, a staff member was familiar with the location of the fire assembly point on a gate in the front yard area.

**Outing:**

The registered provider advised that the service does not undertake outings.

### 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)  
A staff member was available with up to date FAR (first aid responder) training with an expiry date of 10 February 2026.

(2)(a)(b)  
A first aid box was stored on a high level shelf in the playroom and in an area easily accessible to the staff working directly with the children in the service.

### 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 service held a record of fire drills as conducted in the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on the 17 April 2025.

(b)

The maintenance record for both the fire extinguisher on the wall in the playroom and the smoke alarm system confirmed that a service was conducted on the 5 February 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display on the wall in the playroom.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, the staff were observed to ensure that children were effectively supervised by both sight and sound when playing indoors, during break time and when playing outdoors.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 22 children in daily attendance at any one time in a sessional service. Insurance cover was valid from the 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.