

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS003
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Name of Service:	Silly Billies Playschool
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Address of Service:	Bracklone Street, Portarlinton, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 RX47
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Name of Registered Provider:	Bernadette McLoughlin
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	NA
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

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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

Silly Billies Playschool is a sessional service located in the town of Portarlinton Co. Laois. The service is one of two early years services operated by the registered provider in Co Laois. The premises is single story and located on the grounds of the registered providers domestic dwelling. The service provides sessional care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years, Monday to Friday between 09:00-12:00pm. The premises consists of a hall, two playrooms, a breakout room and an office. Two separate enclosed outdoor play areas are located at the back and front of the premises. Car parking and set down is available on the public road outside the registered provider's premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs seven adults to work in the service. The registered provider works directly with the children and facilitated the inspection on 24 March. Seven childcare staff were present on the day of inspection and the registered provider.

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

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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.

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d),(4) – Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11 (1)(3)– Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child
- Regulation 24(1),(3)(b)– Checking in and out and record of attendance
- Regulation 25(1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid
- Regulation 26(1)(a)(b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures

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*

(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 was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Eight staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted:

(a)

Fourteen written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

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Two written validated references were available from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all eight staff. In regard to the six staff members, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)
Police vetting was available for three staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)
Eight employed childcare staff members working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be the equivalent.

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 adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

(3)
The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.
There were fifteen children aged between 3-5 years being supervised directly by three adults in the Playschool group.
There were fifteen children aged between 4-5 years being supervised directly by three adults in the Preschool group.

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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

Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches consisted of a variety of sandwiches, pasta, yoghurts, brioche and fresh fruit. Staff sat with the children during snack times and engaged in conversation. Children's drinks were readily available in their lunch bags which were accessible to the children throughout the morning. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversation with each other. Children were not rushed while eating.

Regular hand washing was observed throughout the morning as children washed their hands before their snack, after toileting and after outdoor play. Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary.

Supporting relationships

Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names, appropriate eye contact was made, and soft vocal tones were used during interactions.

The service-maintained craft books for each child with children's artwork and photographs of their activities and learning, which are provided to parents at the end of the year.

A family wall displayed photographs of the children and their families. This helped the children feel connected to home. Child friendly pictures of the day's routine were positioned at child's level on the wall. This supported the children to feel secure and independent.

Staff communicate with parents via an electronic application which provided updates regarding the day-to-day care of the children and the service.

Physical and material environment

The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the session as they chose between activities. Toys and play equipment were positioned on accessible open shelving which nurtured independence,

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facilitated choice and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play. Areas which promoted role play were available such as a dress up areas with a variety of costumes. A range of books and small vinyl couches and chairs were available in the reading area of each room. Children had a choice of small world houses, kitchen corners with toy pots and food and train tracks. Fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, and laces and spools for threading.

Children had access to an outdoor area throughout the day. A large outdoor play area with natural grass was provided at the back of the preschool and a smaller enclosed roofed outdoor area was provided at the front of the premises. The outdoor areas were designed like outdoor classrooms and had open shelving with a range of play equipment. Part of the outdoor areas was covered with a plastic corrugated roof, which provided for the continuation of outdoor play in inclement weather. The weather on the day of inspection was raining however, children still enjoyed participating in activities under the roofed areas outside such as dancing, playing with small world houses and making jigsaws on the tables provided. Outdoor climbing equipment, footballs, goals and slides were available to the children. Outdoor overalls and wellington boots were available for the children to wear during inclement weather.

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 entrance door to the pre-school was controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access. Parents and visitors are greeted at the internal fence at the outdoor play area. The entrance door to the service is located in the outdoor play area.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored on shelves out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper towels were available from dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands before snack time and after using the bathroom. Pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

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The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not required to be administered to any child on the day of inspection. The registered provider informed the inspector that no child in the service was on specific medication requiring a care plan.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection.

Outing:

A policy was in place to support outings conducted by the service. The registered provider advised that the children participate in nature walks, visits to the local library and fire station. At Christmas the children visit the local nursing home. An annual outing occurs yearly for the older group of children to an indoor activity centre. Parental consent forms were completed prior to outings on the service's electronic application. Hi visibility jackets were available for the children to wear when participating in nature walks.

Non-Compliance Information

Outing:

Written Risk Assessments were not recorded prior to outings. This was at variance to the services Policy on Outings which stated, 'Risk Assessments will be recorded and ready for inspection'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Outing:

The registered provider has created a Risk Assessment Form to fill in prior to outings/school tours with the children. These will be kept on the premises for inspection. All staff have been advised of the new process.

Supporting documentation submitted

Outing:

Risk Assessment Form template submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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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-

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

Compliance Information

(1)
The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the electronic attendance record.

(3)(b)
The registered provider ensured a written record of visitors was maintained on the premises.

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)
One staff member was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a)
A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the service.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

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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)

A written record for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 23 March 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced on 30 April 2025. The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on 01 September 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.