

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS004		
Name of Service:	Tots and Co Playschool		
Address of Service:	4 Newline Close, Newline Road, Mountrath, Co. Laois		
Eircode:	R32 E523		
Name of Registered Provider:	Colette Phelan		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	12/06/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM 8
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.		
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy		
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

The service is registered as a part time service catering for up to 22 children. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates the part time service between the hours of 08:30 and 13:30 with two ECCE sessions operating between the hours of 08:30 and 11:30 and 12:00 to 17:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is operated by an independent provider.

The Early Years' Service is located on the ground floor of a two-storey adapted residential building. One large pre-school room and a kitchen are provided on the ground floor. An office and space for the school age service is provided on the first floor. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear and sides of the service. The service is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Mountrath, County Laois.

Staffing

The registered provider who works directly with the children and three staff members were present on 12 June 2025.

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, 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

(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)

The registered provider and a named person to deputise were present and available as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present throughout the inspection.

Four files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from either a past employer or a source other than a previous employer in respect of the files reviewed. Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)
A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the four files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

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

(4)
Staff members working directly with children attending the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(4)
There were twenty children attending the service supervised directly by four adults in the morning.

There were eight children attending the service supervised directly by three adults in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

The attendance records of staff reviewed indicated that two staff members were present during the opening hours of the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Parents provided all snacks and meals to the children attending on a sessional or part time basis. Additional food was available to the children if required.

A scheduled period of rest, relaxation and meditation is available at the end of the sessional service for those children availing of part time provision.

The service worked in partnership with parents. A social media platform is used to provide information and updates. The children's learning journals depicted each child's developmental progress and activities throughout the year. A staff member was observed to hand each child over to the parent at the end of the afternoon session.

A range of developmentally appropriate, challenging and creative experiences were available for all children.

Areas of interest were noted in the pre-school room and included home areas, construction, arts and crafts, dress up and nature displays. Materials included paint, play dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals, and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws and shape sorters. All children were observed to enjoy free play in the outdoor area choosing their own activities and supported by staff.

In the outdoor play area toys and equipment included a playhouse, benches and a crawl tunnel. A sheltered area was available and equipped with an outdoor play kitchen. A variety of bikes, trikes and other toys for physical play were also noted. A polytunnel was in place with the children participating in the sowing and growing of seasonal vegetables.

(1)(b)

Children were content with their carers. Staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Staff were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. The staff present were observed to attend to the care needs of the children. Staff assisted children with nasal hygiene using tissues and hygienic disposal. Individual storage boxes were maintained and identifiable to each child. These boxes contained each child's personal bag as well as spare clothes in the event of clothing becoming wet. Staff were observed to prompt children to use the toilet at frequent intervals. A staff member accompanied children to the toilet and was present with them for support, changing and the supervision of hand washing.

(3)

Good teamwork between the staff members was observed during the inspection. Positive behaviour strategies were observed during the inspection. Staff used a calm approach using soft language tones, giving positive praise and encouragement to children. Occasional episodes of behaviour that challenged was managed in a positive caring manner. Redirection, reassurance and calming techniques were used where appropriate by staff.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, sensory, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, home corners and physical play.

(b)

Low level beds were available for children over two years of age to sleep. Soft furnishings provide appropriate rest facilities in the pre-school room for any child who wished to avail of rest and relaxation.

(3)(a)

An outdoor play area was attached to the rear and sides of the service. Tarmac and all-weather surfaces were in place. The perimeter was secured by a concrete wall and high-level metal and wooden fences.

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 main entrance door to the service was secure. The Inspector signed the visitor book on arrival in the service.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents and hand sanitiser.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. The temperature of the water recorded at the wash hand basins was approximately 30 degrees Celsius.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school room and in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

A fridge was available for the storage of non-perishable goods in the kitchen.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered at the time of the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature. Appropriate documentation was in place in the event of medication administration should it be required.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed throughout the service. A fire assembly point was noted in the outdoor play area.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)
The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a nominated staff member.

(3)(a)
All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) has to be approved by a staff member.

(b)
A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service from the month of August to the month of June.

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 was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation. Three other staff members held in date certificates in paediatric first aid.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in accessible and conspicuous locations in the pre-school service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school 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 firefighting 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 monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 3 June 2025.

(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 in September 2024. The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in August 2024.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.