

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS027
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Name of Service:	The Maples Creche
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Address of Service:	Forest Park, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 A26E
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Name of Registered Provider:	Monica Delaney
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	33
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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, C. O' Connor Hughes & R. Flynn
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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.
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Description of service

This full day care service provides full day care, part time and sessional places for children. The service operates from 07:30 – 18:30 on a Monday to Friday basis. This full day care service is part of a multiple.

This early years' service is located in an adapted domestic single-storey premises. The chick's room (aged 2-3 years), the caterpillar room (aged 1-2 years), the butterfly room (aged 3-4 years) a sleep room, an office and a kitchen are provided. The early years' service is located in a residential area in the town of Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Onsite car parking and set down facilities are available.

Staffing

The registered provider and eleven adults were working directly with the children on the 27 February 2025. Two adults were available for relief cover. A cook and an administrator were present in the service. The registered provider attended the closing meeting.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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

(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 designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge were available in the service.

(b)

The registered provider and the designated person in charge were present for the duration of the inspection.

Sixteen staff files including 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.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the 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 available for two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 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.

(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.

(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.

(2)

There were thirty-eight children attending the service supervised directly by eleven adults in the morning. Thirty-three children were present in the afternoon supervised by ten adults.

(8)(a)

The staff roster reviewed indicated that two adults are on the premises during the hours of operation.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Chicks room

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the room as children enjoyed the various activities which included story time, free play and outdoor play. Staff supported children during small group tabletop activities and assisted them as necessary. Children washed their hands before meals and were supervised by staff.

Regular nappy changing was carried out by staff and on a needs basis as required. Good communication with the staff member and child was observed during nappy changing. Staff were positive towards children using individual names, maintaining eye contact while conversing and using soft language tones. Children were praised after completing an activity. A verbal handover by the staff member to the parent was observed when a child was collected from the room when the morning session was over. A folder for each child with artwork and photographs is given to the parents at the end of the pre -school term.

Suitable and age-appropriate toys and equipment were available for children's use in the chick's room. Low level chairs were in place. Play materials were accessible to children on low level shelving.

Caterpillars room

Staff supported children during small group activities including music and movement, story time and building block activities.

Suitable and age-appropriate toys and equipment including push pull toys, a toy kitchen, musical toys, a small world area and dressing up clothes were available for children's use. An upset child received reassurance and support from a staff member. The children enjoyed time outdoors in the afternoon.

Butterfly room

The staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Staff members were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. The pre-school room was laid out with areas of interest. Low level tables, chairs and low-level shelving with equipment

were available to all children. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences were available for the children. Materials included paint, play dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws and shape sorters. Children’s artwork was noted and paper, crayons, paint and a variety of open-ended art materials were available.

A three-week menu was noted in the service. The main meal consisted of pasta, cheese, mixed vegetables with milk or water to drink was served to the children by the cook at 12:30. Children took their time and enjoyed their food. Staff sat with children and encouraged conversations and interactions.

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 equipment and materials were provided in the service.

(2)(a)

Cosy couches were available for children to rest and relax in the pre-school rooms. The sleep room was equipped with four cots. Low level beds were available for older children to rest.

(3)(a)

Three interconnected outdoor play areas are attached to the rear of the premises with direct access from each of the pre-school rooms. Sheltered sections were in place so support all weather outdoor play. A wire fence was located to the rear of the outdoor play area and high-level wooden fences were located at both sides of the outdoor play area.

Interest areas included a wooden constructed “shop”, toy kitchen, balance beam, a mobile music wall and a crawl and climb unit. Concrete and gravel surface areas were noted.

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 to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. The inspectors signed the visitors book on arrival.

Infection Control:

A cleaning schedule was available for the service. All toys and materials were easily cleanable.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet.

Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school rooms.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were observed to carry out physical sleep checks every ten minutes and initialled these checks in a log.

The sleep room temperature was recorded at 17 degrees Celsius.

Fire Safety:

A fire assembly point was noted to the rear of the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The three tier trolley with a nappy changing mat placed on the top shelf was unsafe for use and not suitable for nappy changing in the chick's sanitary accommodation.
2. The kitchen was open and the contents within were accessible to children and posed a potential risk of injury if a child went into the kitchen.

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing procedures observed were ineffective for infection control purposes:
 - A staff member did not wash their hands or wear an apron when carrying out the nappy changing procedure.
 - Staff members redressed the child with the same gloves used for nappy changing.
 - The child's hands were not washed after nappy changing.
 - The staff member cleaned the nappy changing mat wearing the same gloves used for nappy changing.
 - The nappy changing policy available in the service did not detail a step-by-step procedure for nappy changing that staff could adhere to.
 - The wash hand basin in the nappy changing area on the main corridor was not accessible due to the position of the nappy changing unit.
 - Cold water was noted at the wash hand basin in the nappy changing area on the main corridor which was not conducive to appropriate hand washing.
 - Children were observed to wash their hands in cold water at the wash hand basin in the Chicks room which was not conducive to appropriate hand washing.
2. Children's spare clothes were stored in the sanitary accommodation in the Chicks room which was unsuitable due to the risk of cross contamination.
3. Foot operated pedal bins were not in place in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste.
4. The floor mat in the chick's room was torn at the edges and required replacement.
5. The mechanical ventilation in the sanitary accommodation and nappy changing areas were noted to be dusty with physical debris which required cleaning.
6. Cobwebs were noted on the ceiling lights in the sanitary accommodation for the chick's room and required cleaning.

7. A container for mouthed toys was not available in the Caterpillars room.
8. Fridge temperatures were not recorded in the pre-school rooms to ensure appropriate storage of any perishable food products.

Administration of Medication:

1. The second staff member signature was not detailed on the children's medication form record stored on the electronic device in the service. The second staff member signature is required to ensure medication is given in safe manner in the service.

Safe Sleep:

1. The sleep logs for the ten-minute physical checks of sleeping children did not include or record the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children.
2. The sleep room temperature was not recorded on any checks or logs.
3. An electronic monitor was not in place to alert staff to a waking or distressed child in between sleep room checks.
4. The wall mounted temperature monitor in the sleep room was not operational. It is acknowledged that the registered provider took a corrective action and had a replacement device to install by the close of the inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider stated the following in the response:

1. The three-tier trolley was removed and replaced with a two-tiered nappy changing trolley unit. Staff have been reminded of safety consideration regarding replacement of equipment. (photograph included).
2. A lock has new been installed on the kitchen door. Staff have been reminded that the kitchen door is to be kept locked at all times. (photograph included).

Infection Control:

The registered provider stated the following in the response:

1. A new nappy changing procedure has been developed. Staff have been retrained on the nappy changing policy and all hygiene procedures associated with nappy changing since the Inspection. The nappy changing procedure is on display for all staff. The thermostat was fixed on all taps following the inspection (photographs included).

2. All spare clothes were removed from the sink area in the Chicks room and relocated. (photograph included).
3. The bins were replaced. (photograph included).
4. The floor mat was replaced. (photograph included).
5. The mechanical ventilation was cleaned and staff have been re-trained on all cleaning procedures. (photograph included).
6. The light was cleaned and staff have been re-trained on all cleaning procedures. (photograph included).
7. A new container for mouthed toys is now available in the Caterpillars room. (photograph included).
8. The temperature is now recorded for all fridges. (photograph included).

Administration of Medication:

The registered provider stated the following in the response:

1. A second signature has been added to the medical administration form and staff have been re-trained on the administration of medication policy. (photograph included).

Safe Sleep:

The registered provider stated the following in the response:

1. The sleep logs have been amended to include the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children. (photograph included).
2. The sleep logs have been amended to include the room temperature. (photograph included).
3. An electronic monitor is now in place. (photograph included).
4. The wall mounted temperature monitor in the sleep room was replaced on the day of the inspection. (photograph included).

Staff have been re-trained on the Safe Sleep Policy for the service. Staff have been reminded of the services health and safety obligations and flagging risks to the registered provider.

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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)
Two adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) were available on the premises during the hours of operation.
- (2)(a)
First aid boxes were available in the pre-school rooms.
- (b)
A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the children in the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(a)
The first aid boxes were not stocked in line with TUSLA requirements as outlined in the Quality Regulatory Framework document.
The first aid boxes did not contain the following required items:
- Individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings of assorted sizes.
 - Sterile eye pads
 - Water based burns dressings
 - Crepe bandage
 - Paramedic Shears

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)(a)
The registered provider stated the following in the response:
The First Aid boxes were restocked and a monthly first aid box check system is now in place. (photograph included).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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 14 February 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 and the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in January 2025.

(4)

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

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 2025.