

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LS034				
<b>Name of Service:</b>	The Children's House				
<b>Address of Service:</b>	44 The Fairway Ballyroan Road, Abbeyleix Laois				
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32N267				
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Margaret Palmer- Bergin Michael Bergin				
<b>Service type:</b>	Full day care				
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	20/11/2025				
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>28</td> <td>PM</td> <td>22</td> </tr> </table>	AM	28	PM	22
AM	28	PM	22		
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Tusla Early Years Services 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).

## Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

## Description of service

The Children's House is a full day care service caring for children in the age range 1 to 6 years. The service is operational between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm. The single storey standalone purpose-built premises is located in a residential housing estate in Abbeyleix town, Laois. Rooms available in the service include three playrooms, two sleep rooms, a kitchen, a staff room, sanitary accommodation for children and staff, a nappy changing station, an office and a storeroom for toys and equipment. Outdoor play areas are provided directly behind the service with direct access from two of the playrooms. A school age service is also provided between 2.00 and 6.00pm from one of the playrooms in the service.

## Staffing

The service is staffed by 9 adults. In addition, the person in charge works in the service in a management capacity and not directly with the children in attendance. The registered providers do not work 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 10 – Policies, procedures etc of pre-school service

Regulation 11 - Staffing Levels,

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child,

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play,

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,

Regulation 25 - First aid,

Regulation 28 – Insurance,

Regulation 33 Furnishing of information to the agency.

The scope of the inspection included all rooms in use in the service.

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 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)

The service has 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 as required were present in the service on the day of inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in the service. The person in charge had established and maintained an appropriate administrative process to facilitate the effective day to day operation of the service.

(2)(a)

Two validated references from past employers were held on file in respect of four staff members. Two validated references from a reputable source were held on file in respect of one staff member. A validated reference from a combination of a past employer and a reputable source were held on file in respect of the remaining five staff working in the service.

(C)

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

(d)

A police vetting was held on file in respect of two staff members who had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as adults.

(3)

Records held on file confirmed that the necessary vetting procedures were conducted prior to the appointment of staff to work directly with the children in the service.

(4)

The staff working directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education varying from level 5 to level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

The inspector reviewed the following service policies and procedures.

The Policy on Accidents and Incidents.

The policy included the detail of the measures taken by the service to both prevent accidents and incidents and the procedure followed by the service when an accident or incident occurred. The measures taken to contact parents, how information was recorded and detail of risk assessment procedures followed subsequent to the occurrence of an accident or incident was also detailed in the policy.

The Policy on Outdoor Play.

The policy on outdoor play advised of opportunities availed of and benefits of outdoor play, safety requirements and child supervision during outdoor play.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1)  
An adequate number of adults cared for the children in attendance on the day of inspection.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were maintained evidenced by the following;
- On the morning of inspection
- Three adults cared for 6 children, availing of a full day care in the age range 1 to 2 years in the playroom in the service.
  - One adult cared for 3 children, availing of a full day care in the age range 2 to 3 years in the pre-ecce playroom in the service.
  - Five adults cared for 19 children, availing of a full day care in the age range 2 to 5 years in the montessori playroom in the service.
- In the afternoon,
- Two adults cared for 9 children in the playroom in the service.
  - Two adults also cared for 13 children in the Montessori playroom in the service during the afternoon.

### 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) The atmosphere in the playrooms and when children played outdoors was relaxed. Children were observed to be assisted to wash their hands under supervision on return from outdoor play to the montessori room and before dinner in playroom. Children in montessori room enjoyed their morning break in the company of the staff present in the room. Healthy snacks comprising of sandwiches, rolls, crackers, yoghurts and fresh fruit including bananas and apples were provided from home settings for break time. Staff were observed to praise children for placing their plastic plates in the sink and using the bin in the room to dispose of wrappings as they children finished their snacks.

The service had a three week menu plan and both lunch and evening tea were prepared, cooked and served in the service. In the playroom, children were lined up to wash their hands before dinner. Three children were observed seated in highchairs which were secured by a 5-point harness during dinner time and were removed from the highchairs once dinner time was over. The remaining three children sat at a low-level table for dinner in the company of the three staff in the room. The children enjoyed fish fingers, broccoli, cauliflower, chips and gravy with beakers of water to drink. Children were given time to self-feed with plastic spoons and eat dinner at their individual pace. The staff member in the pre ecce playroom sat with the three children in the room and both engaged in conversation and sang songs to the children as they sat at a low-level table to eat dinner.

Evening tea served in the playrooms comprised of ham and cheese wraps with fruit, which included bananas and raspberries on the day of inspection.

Boots, hanging on a stand at the entrance to the outdoor play area were provided for outdoor play. Children cared for in the three playrooms in the service, wearing coats, hats and overalls in the case of the younger children, were observed to avail of outdoor play during the course of the inspection.

The staff in the service were observed to work in assigned care rooms to provide continuity of care and offered the children a secure base to engage in a variety of activities both indoors and outdoors throughout the day of inspection. An electronic communications application was in use in the service to provide parents and guardians

with updates on their child’s daily eating, sleeping and nappy changing patterns and also provide feedback on activities children participated in during their day in the service. On the day of inspection, children were observed blowing and catching water bubbles, playing on the swings and on a climbing frame, playing in the play houses and with a ball outdoors. Activities in the Montessori room that children were observed to participate in included colouring with markers and painting, playing with sea shells and making jigsaws seated at low level tables on chairs. Two of the younger children in the playroom were observed sitting on a soft floor mat while playing with blocks as a staff member pointed out the colours of the blocks to the children.

### 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 have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Toys and play equipment were observed to be developmentally appropriate for the children in attendance in the three care rooms. Space was available in each room to organise toys in areas of interest and on low level shelving to allow children to easily see and select toys of their choice to play with. Arts and craft materials were provided in all playrooms in the service. Moulding clay, flash cards, games, puzzles and jigsaws were provided to play with while sitting at low level tables. Mathematical areas, language areas and shelving with natural materials including bowls, trays, jugs and spoons were observed in the montessori room. Home corners with tea sets, soft toys, cots and playhouses were provided. In the pre ecce room, the children had access to doctor's sets, tools for pretend

play, shapes, pegs and low-level wheel along wooden toys. Musical instruments were provided and both animals and miniature toys on wheels to play with, seated at tables and during floor play.

(b)  
The rest area in the montessori room comprised of a teepee tent with a soft mat and soft cushions. A soft carpet area and soft toys were provided in the rest area in the pre ecce room. A large soft floor mat, cushions and a low level couch were provided in the playroom for rest. Books were provided in all rest areas to allow children to take a break from activities and to sit and relax. Two cot rooms were provided with five cots in one room and 3 cots in the second cot room. Children cared for in both the pre ecce room and the playroom had access to the cots to facilitate sleep when required. Low level beds were stored for use directly in the montessori room for children to rest in a section of the L- shaped room and away from play activities.

(3)  
There was direct access to the outdoor play area from both the playroom and the pre ecce room. The montessori room had access to the outdoors from the hallway leading to the back door of the service. “Soft touch” areas with a smooth all weather ground surface were provided under an open perspex roof to facilitate outdoor play during both inclement and warm weather conditions. In addition, a green area was provided for energetic play outdoors. The outdoor area was safely and securely fenced in by the back wall of the building and timber fencing. High level timber gates, bolted from the inside at the open gable ends of the outdoor play area, guarded against both unauthorised access to children and unsupervised exit of children when playing outdoors.

### 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 secured and a buzzer was provided to facilitate access. The oil tank for the heating system and cleaning equipment including mops, buckets and a garden lawnmower were stored in an area enclosed by concrete walls to prevent children from accessing this area when playing outdoors. Refuse bins were stored in an enclosed area off the front of the service, in an area not used by the children. Cleaning agents and chemicals were stored in a press in the staff room in the service. Staff coats and personal belongings were also stored in the staff room and an area outside of the playroom. A high level latch was provided on the door to the

storeroom and the kitchen in the service to prevent children from accessing these areas. Copies of daily risk assessments conducted prior to outdoor play were available and reviewed by the inspector.

### **Infection Control:**

Sinks with a supply of hot and cold water were provided in the playrooms to facilitate daily cleaning in the rooms. Liquid soap, a thermostatically controlled supply of hot water, disposable paper towels and foot pedal operated bins were provided in both the sanitary accommodation and nappy changing area. Individual containers, labelled with children's names, were used in the nappy changing area to store children's individual nappies, wipes and creams. A staff member was observed to wear disposable gloves and an apron to change a child, clean the nappy changing mat after changing and wash both the child's and her own hands after the nappy change. The openable windows in all rooms in the service, which were opened during the inspection, ensured a flow of fresh air into the sanitary accommodation and rooms occupied by the children

### **Administration of Medication:**

No medication was administered to children on the day of inspection. The service had parental consent forms to administer medication in the case of an emergency and for prescribed medication. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service. A medical administration book was provided in the service to record the administration of both prescribed and non-prescribed medication. The administration of medication policy for the service was reviewed by the inspector and included the detail of the procedure undertaken by staff when administering medication and the procedure used to record the administration of medication.

### **Safe Sleep**

The two designated sleep rooms with standard cots were observed to facilitate child led sleep on the day of inspection. Sleep logs were observed for both sleep rooms and were used to record the 10 minutes sleep check observations, position and room temperatures. The sleep rooms were maintained at the required temperature. The inspector recorded sleep room temperatures at 19°C and 17°C on the day of inspection.

### **Fire Safety:**

The fire exits at both the front and back of the service were unobstructed on the day of inspection. Fire assembly points were posted in both the back garden and in the car park at the front of the service.

### **Outing:**

The service had an outings policy. The inspector was advised that the service did not partake in organised outings during the current school year. Sample templates to illustrate the risk assessments conducted prior to outings were available in the service.

### 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

Three staff members had up to date first aid responder (FAR) training with an expiry date of 6 December 2026 in the case of two staff members and 8 December 2026 in the case of the remaining staff member.

(2)(a)(b)

A first aid box was provided in each playroom in the service and in the kitchen and were available to staff caring for children in the service.

### 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 40 children in daily attendance in a full day care service.

Insurance was valid from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026

## Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

### Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

*A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may reasonably require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.*

### Compliance Information

The person in charge and staff in the service furnished the inspector with the necessary information to conduct the inspection.