

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015LS035

Name of Service: Just 4 Kids Creche

Address of Service: Whitefields, Station Road, Portarlinton, Co. Laois

Eircode: R32 P042

Name of Registered Provider: Catriona Robinson

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 06/11/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	63	PM	43
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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

Inspection undertaken by: R Flynn and F Carty

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.

Description of service

Just for Kids childcare provides full day, part time and sessional care to children aged 0 to 6 years. The service is one of three services operated by the registered provider. The premises is a two-story building located in a residential area of Portarlinton, Co Laois. Just for Kids childcare has a baby room, wobbler room, toddler room, two full day preschool rooms and a sessional room. An onsite kitchen, sleep room and an office are also provided. An outdoor area is located to the back and side of the premises. The service opens from 07:00am to 18:15pm Monday to Friday.

Staffing

The registered provider employs nineteen staff in the service. There were nineteen adults present on the day of the inspection including the registered provider, a person in charge, a cook and an auxiliary staff member. The designated person in charge was not assigned to a care room but available onsite to provide support if required. The registered provider manages oversight of the service and does not work directly with the children. The registered provider and person in charge facilitated the inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

- Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4).
- Regulation 10 – Policies Procedures of per school service.
- Regulation 11– Staffing Levels (1), (2), (8)(a).
- Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(a).
- Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures (1) (a) (b), (4).

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 27 - Supervision and 29(d) - Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, 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.

(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)(b)

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

(c)

The staff members were aware of the management structure, the lines of authority and their roles within the service. The names of the person in charge and the deputy person in charge were displayed on a notice board in the entrance hall.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider it was determined that seven new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 05 April 2024. Seven new staff files were reviewed, and the following was noted;

- (a)
Ten written validated reference were available from a previous employer.
- (b)
Four written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the seven adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.
- (d)
Police vetting was available for two new staff members who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.
- (4)
Six of the new staff members were employed to provide direct care to the children attending the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education from Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 outings, supervision, staff training and healthy eating policies were reviewed and contained all relevant information required.

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. In the morning on arrival at the service, there were 63 children being supervised directly by fourteen adults. In the afternoon there were 43 children being supervised by eleven adults.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

Morning

- There was one staff member providing direct care to two children aged between 0-1 years in the Earth room.
- There were three staff providing direct care to nine children aged between 1-2 years in the Sun room.
- There were two staff providing direct care to five children aged between 2-3 years in the Mars room.
- There were three staff providing direct care to fourteen children aged between 2-4 years in the Neptune room.
- There were two staff providing direct care to eighteen children aged between 2-4 years in the Jupiter room.

- There were three staff providing direct care to fifteen children aged between 3-4 years in the Saturn room.

Afternoon

- There was one staff member providing direct care to two children aged between 0-1 years in the Earth room.
- There were three staff providing direct care to nine children aged between 1-2 years in the Sun room.
- There were two staff providing direct care to four children aged between 2-3 years in the Mars room.
- There were three staff providing direct care to children aged between 2-4 years in the Neptune room.
- There were three staff providing direct care to fifteen children aged between 3-4 years in the Saturn room.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following a review of the staff roster for the service.

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 of children

Parents provide the morning and afternoon snack for the children attending. The service provides the dinner and tea, and food is freshly prepared by an onsite cook. The main hot meal served on the day of inspection was beef casserole and mashed potato. Children were offered milk with their dinner. Tea was homemade pancakes, fresh fruit and homemade yoghurt. Water was freely available in each room throughout the day. Extra food for babies such as yoghurt and pouches of baby food brought in from home, were stored in the fridge in the Earth room. Babies in the Earth room were fed in highchairs. Children in the Mars room and preschool rooms sat at low level tables together eating lunch. Younger children wore bibs during meals.

Children in the Saturn room were observed engaged in group activity of singing and demonstrating actions. One child did not want to participate in the group activity and was supported to sit with a staff member and quietly read a book.

Nappy changing procedures were carried out on a routine basis and more frequently if required.

Sleep practice observed on the day of inspection for babies in the Earth room was child led. Babies slept when they needed and were allowed sleep as long as they required. Nine cots were available for the sleep needs of babies who required a cot to sleep in. Children in the Mars room were facilitated with a scheduled rest in the afternoon.

Supporting relationships

Babies in the Earth room were observed to be held and cuddled by the staff and any child that became unsettled was immediately attended to and reassured.

Staff advised that communication with parents was via an electronic application that provides updates to parents regarding their child's activities, sleep, care and learning. Verbal updates were also provided at drop off and collection times. Learning journals were maintained for each child, documenting their individual learning and development over the course of the year.

Physical and material environment

Babies in the Earth room were observed to enjoy a variety of floor-based play activities with developmentally appropriate play equipment such as a ball pit, tabletop musical toys and age-appropriate push along equipment.

The Earth room had an armchair for staff to sit on when bottle feeding or providing comfort to a child.

The Mars room had a range of play-based equipment. This included an ice-cream cart, small world house, bookshelves, a play kitchen, drums and building blocks. Areas of interest in the care rooms promoted spontaneous play. For example, the Saturn room had a book rack, dress up costumes on a rail, role play area with kitchen and play food and a shop.

Children's artwork was displayed on the wall, 'Our Area' displayed photographs of the children and their local community area.

Non-Compliance Information

1. A number of lunch boxes provided from home in the Saturn room were observed to have crisps, chocolate and jellies. Staff were observed to pour the crisps out onto a plate for a child to eat. This was in variance with the services healthy food policy which promoted healthy eating.
2. The children in the Sun room attending on a full day basis were not provided with an opportunity for outdoor play throughout the day. Outdoor play provides children with a space for gross motor development such as running, climbing and using equipment such as scooters/trikes. Children's emotional wellbeing and regulation is promoted by spending time out in fresh air for periods during the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Staff have been debriefed on the Healthy Eating policy and will no longer be serving foods that are not permitted. Any food that is not in line with the Healthy Eating policy will be returned home in lunch boxes. Parents have been notified regarding foods that are not permitted in the service. A "Healthy Lunchbox Guide" has been sent to parents and posters have been displayed at the entrance to the service. Daily monitoring of lunchboxes has been added to the room leader duties.
2. A daily outdoor schedule has been implemented in the service ensuring children have two outdoor sessions per day. Staff have been briefed on the importance of outdoor play for children's development. Outdoor time is being recorded in the room logbook and monitored weekly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of updated Healthy Eating policy received.

Copy of Outdoor Play log template received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 19 have been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The Earth room, Mars room, Neptune, Saturn and Jupiter rooms had a good variety of age and developmentally appropriate toys, materials and equipment available for the children. Accessible low level open shelving displayed the pre-school materials and equipment. Arts and craft materials were available including, paint, paper and crayons. The Earth room had a wall mounted sensory board accessible to the babies, a ball pit and a variety of push along equipment.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The Saturn room had no rest area or cosy area for the children to sit quietly or take a break from activities if they wished. The rest area in the Sun room also required development as there were only two cushions and a soft mat available to the children, and a number of children in the Sun room did not sleep at the designated sleep time and required a place to rest during the day.
2. The two highchairs provided for babies in the Earth room had no foot holds. A baby being fed was observed to have their legs dangling, making it more difficult and uncomfortable for them to sit upright during feeding.
3. It was observed that two children in the Mars room were sitting on chairs that were too high preventing the children to sit with their feet placed on the floor for balance and stability.
4. In the Sun room there were a number of battery-operated toys with no batteries which prevented them from working. There was a large kitchen and home area available however, there were no supporting materials available which prevented the children from extending their play experiences.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The Saturn room rest area has been established with soft mats, cushions and a cosy tent.
The Sun room rest area has been upgraded with additional cushions, soft furnishings and quiet-time resources.
2. New highchairs were ordered with adjustable footrests. All feeding equipment included in quarterly equipment safety audits. Staff have been refreshed on correct feeding/posture guidelines.

3. Children chairs have been replaced with appropriate seating per child's height.
Staff ensure children's feet can reach the floor when sitting for stability.
4. Batteries were placed in toys requiring batteries. The home area has been stocked with play equipment such as pots, pans and dress-up items. A weekly toy audit has been introduced. A "Broken/needs battery" box has been placed in the hallway for quick identification.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of rest area.

Invoice for highchairs received. Notice on Guidelines for Children's Posture received.

Photography of batteries placed in toy.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 21 have been adequately 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:

Entry to the service was secured and controlled with a bell entry system. This system prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.

Cleaning products were stored on high shelves out of reach of children.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were well maintained and in good working order.

A low-level handrail was in place for smaller children to use when transitioning between their rooms and the outside area.

Infection Control:

Liquid hand soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from wall mounted dispensers. Pedal bins were available in each care room for the hygienic disposal of waste.

The pre-school rooms were visually clean.

Refrigerators were observed in each pre-school room.

Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation as well as openable windows. The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

Children's lunch boxes in all rooms inspected were stored in the fridge.

A steriliser was available in the Earth room for the sterilising of babies soothers. Extra soothers were stored in individual labelled cases.

Administration of Medication:

A specific care plan was available for one child who required medication. The staff were familiar with required safe practice when administering medication in the service.

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in the storeroom out of reach of the children. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Staff were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. Children aged under 2 years old were provided with a cot while older children slept on low level beds. Sleeping children were physically monitored at 10-minute intervals. Staff were observed to record the colour, position and breathing pattern of the sleeping children on a tablet.

Fire Safety:

Fire exits on the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. The fire assembly point was in the car park to the front of the service.

Outing:

Staff advised the inspectors that outings occur with the children in the service. Babies from the Earth room and Mars room go on walks to the local park and train station. A risk assessment, check list and parental consent forms were completed prior to the outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A child from the Saturn room was observed to have whole grapes for their lunch presenting a potential choking hazard to a child. Staff did not take immediate action and were notified by the inspectors to cut remove the grapes in half.
2. It was advised to the inspector by a staff member in the Earth room, that bottles of powdered infant formula were being reconstituted by staff for babies in the Earth room. This practice is not recommended by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland guidance note 22 which states that it is not recommended that child day-

care facilities prepare prepared infant formula for the children in their care. Baby bottles should be prepared at home prior and stored safely in a fridge in the service.

Infection Control:

3. Handwashing practices were inadequate to control the spread of infection as children's hands were not routinely washed. Children were not brought to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks in the Mars room.
4. A number of children in the Sun room were observed to drink from each other's cups throughout the morning. Staff did not sterilise or remove these cups from the room to be cleaned. This poses a risk of cross infection.
5. Children and staff in the Sun room were observed to handle the bin in the drawer under the sink with their hands. This poses a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Grapes are now immediately cut in half. Staff have been retrained on potential choking hazards and safe food preparation. Parents were resent the Healthy Eating policy.
2. Preparation of infant formula has stopped and parents have been informed that bottles must be prepared at home.

Infection Control:

3. Staff refresher training on correct handwashing protocols. Handwashing posters are displayed at sinks. Room leaders will monitor hygiene routines daily.
4. Cups were replaced with labelled photographs, and the water station is monitored more appropriately.
5. Bin has been relocated away from child-accessible areas.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Healthy Eating policy received.

Summary Comment

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

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 was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was recorded on 03 November 2025.

(b)

Records were kept of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment which was last serviced on 30 September 2025.

The smoke alarm system in the premises was last serviced on 21 October 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

Non-Compliance Information

1. At 13.45, adequate supervision was not provided to four children were sleeping on floor beds in the Mars room. A staff member briefly left the room and did not seek assistance from other staff when they needed to leave the room briefly.
2. Children in the outdoor play area observed to be climbing onto and jumping off a mud kitchen unit. Staff were observed to have their backs to the children while they climbed and jumped. This posed a risk to injury to the children if they fell.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Staff have been reminded that preschool rooms cannot be left unattended. The sleep supervision protocol was reviewed with all staff. Supervisor will conduct spot-checks during sleep periods.
2. The outdoor area was risk assessed, and staff have been reminded to maintain visual supervision and positioning outdoors. Staff have been recommended completing Risky play training. Outdoor supervision zones have been defined.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 27 have been adequately addressed.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

(d)
The flooring in the Sun room sanitary accommodation was torn and coming away from the edges leaving large gaps in the flooring. This cannot be cleaned effectively; a build-up of dirt and debris were observed in the exposed parts.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

The registered provider arranged for the flooring in the Sun room sanitary accommodation to be replaced with safe, hygienic, non-slip vinyl. Date of repair to be advised, as soon as a tradesman is available to attend.

Preventive Action

Maintenance checklist updated to highlight wear and tear.
Quarterly maintenance walk through introduced.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions proposed. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 (d) remains outstanding until the maintenance work has been completed.