

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS078
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Name of Service:	Kiddiecare Childcare
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Address of Service:	Harbour Street, Mountmellick, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 KV25
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle Bowes
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	10
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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
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.
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Description of service

Kiddiecare Childcare is one of three services operated by the registered provider. The service offers full day care, part time and sessional care and education to children aged 1-6 years old. Opening hours are from 08:00am-18:00pm, Monday-Friday. The service operates from a single storey premises located in the rural town of Mountmellick, Co. Laois. Two pre-school rooms, a Toddler room, an outdoor care room, a relaxation room, a sleep room and kitchen are provided. A portacabin is also onsite and used as an office. A large outdoor play area is located to the rear and side of the building. Carparking is available in a carpark outside the service.

Staffing

The registered employer employs nine staff members who provide direct care to the preschool children, and an axillary staff member is employed as a cleaner who was present during the inspection. The registered provider works in the service directly with the children and was present on the day of 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under,

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment,

- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) – Staffing Levels,
- Regulation 16 Record in Relation to pre-school service,
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b), (3)(a) – Facilities for rest and play,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.

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

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

(b)

As indicated by the roster the registered provider and the deputy person in charge were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

The files of 11 staff members working in the service, including the registered provider, were reviewed as follows.

(a)

Twenty two written validated references were required for the ten staff members and the registered provider, of these eighteen written validated references were available from a past employer and,

(b)

Four written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

(c)
A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of ten staff members and the registered provider. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)
The nine staff members and registered provider 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, or had a letter of equivalence from the minister deemed to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(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 during the inspection.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care and part time care services was adhered to during the inspection.
During the summer months, children are predominantly cared for in the large outdoor area. The fourteen children present were cared for collectively by three staff members, the registered provider and the deputy person in charge.

(8)(a)

On review of the service roster, it was observed that a minimum of two adults were on the premises during the operational 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:

(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)(h)

Details of the attendance of each child was recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service in a log book.

(i)

The staff roster was available and reflected the adults working in the service on each day.

(j)

The registered provider stated that medication is rarely administered. A sample of two medication administration records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

(k)

Six accident and incidents records viewed were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs

Children brought their meals and snacks from home and were observed enjoying nutritious foods such as pasta, rolls, yoghurt and fruit at regular intervals. Perishable foods and lunches sent in from home were stored in the fridge in the kitchen. Hot meals were reheated by the staff at lunch time. The staff sat at the tables with the children during snack and lunchtime engaging in conversation with the children. This promoted a relaxed atmosphere. Children's drinks were available on a trolley inside the service. Additional drink bottles, cups and water jugs were brought outside to a water station in a shaded area during outdoor play.

Nappy changing was carried out regularly and when required. Nappy changes observed on the day were handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Staff members were observed speaking to children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction.

The weather on the day of inspection was warm. Sun cream was applied as required and the staff ensured that the children wore sun hats. Individual bottles of suncream were available and labelled with each child's name. Staff set up a water table play activity under a sheltered area in the outdoor play area to minimise the children's exposure to the sun. Bibs, aprons, wet gear and wellies were available to the children for messy play activities. Spare clothes were available in individual storage baskets if the children required a change of clothing during the session. Tabletop activities such as rolling pins with mounding clay, cars and magnetic tiles for construction, provided an indoor activity after lunch enabling the children to take a break from the sunny weather.

Supporting Relationships

A handbook providing information about the service is given to parents when a child enrolled at the service. The service uses an online application to provide information to parents in relation to updates on their child's day in

relation to eating, nappy changes, activities, sleep, and sleep checks. Staff and parents also exchange information regarding the children at drop off and collection times.

Physical and Material Learning Environment

The indoor preschool rooms were laid out to facilitate sensory experiences and fine motor development. A variety of arts and crafts materials, sand and water trays, and toys such as dinosaurs were in each room. Jigsaws, shape sorters, tacking/sorting toys, beads, laces and toy vehicles were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving in each room which nurtured independence. Well-developed interest areas such as home corners with equipment, and a hairdressing station with a recliner child size armchair and gowns, including empty bottle of hair products, facilitated choice and spontaneous play. The Toddler room had a farm area, an art station and a variety of accessible toys for the children to choose for free play. A community wall with pictures of the local area was present in the junior preschool room, this connected the children to their local community. Photographs of the children enjoying nature activities in different seasons were on display throughout the service. For example, photographs of children collecting leaves in wheelbarrows, playing in muddy puddles and engaged in exploring the garden during winter.

The outdoor play area is well resourced, and an emphasis is placed on outdoor play and learning. The outdoor area offered the children an opportunity for freedom of movement and space to play. All children on the day of inspection were observed to spend most of the day outside in the garden engaged in a variety of activities. For example, children played with water and sand making 'pancakes' in the mud kitchen. A variety of accessible shaded areas were throughout the outdoor garden such as a bamboo tunnel, trees, a sheltered roofed outdoor area and an outdoor classroom. Outdoor sinks were positioned throughout the garden. The registered provider advised these sinks were predominantly used to remove heavy muck from the children's hands following messy play activities. Areas for children to rest were located throughout the garden with seats and additional shading provided under trees.

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)

The two preschool rooms and toddler room were bright and spacious for the children to move about, work and play during their time spent in the service. Each room was resourced with age-appropriate play and learning materials. Furniture was child sized and enabled the children to sit comfortably for activities.

The outdoor area had segregated play areas where the children could enjoy messy and sensory play with the mud kitchen, vegetable planters, digging activities while using the diggers and equipment in the large sand pit and construction area in the outdoor care room. Slides, purpose-built bridges and wobble boards were also available.

(b)

Suitable, comfortable rest areas were available in the care rooms if a child wished to take a break from activities, rest or read a book. The rest areas consisted of child sized vinyl couches, armchairs, cosy corners with books and cushions.

One sleep room with two cots was provided for children who required a cot to sleep in. Nine low-level beds were available for children aged two years and above who availed of a sleep during the day when attending on a full or part time basis if required. No child was observed requiring a sleep on the day of inspection.

A comfortable rest area was provided in the outdoor classroom with two large armchairs and a vinyl couch for children to rest during outdoor play if required.

(3) (a)

The outdoor area was separated into different interest areas such as a ‘mucky area’ where children could dig and splash, and a ‘sow and grow’ area where children planted vegetables, such as onions. Children had space to engage in gross motor activities such as riding bikes and trikes, balance on wobble boards, climb wooden balance beams, or to run. Picnic benches to sit and eat, to participate in tabletop activities were located throughout the garden. Storage shelves and hooks for spare clothing and wellies were located in the outdoor care room the surface of which was covered in artificial grass.

The outdoor care room was used by all age groups. Low level shelving with dinosaurs, shoe storage shelves, pipes set up on the wall for stones and large construction blocks for building were laid out in the outdoor care room. A large sand pit and separate stony area were provided in the outdoor classroom. Pots, pans, shovels and construction vehicles were positioned throughout the sand and stoney areas for messy and imaginative play.

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 gates and two front doors to the service were secured and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorised persons gaining access to the service and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. A walk around the perimeter of the service by the inspector, indicated all internal/external gates and access points were secured with locks and handles out of reach of the children.

Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Warm water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice to control the spread of infection. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of used tissues, paper towels and soiled nappies. Younger children had their hands washed by staff after nappy changes.

Outdoor sinks and paper hand towel dispensers were available for hand washing. The registered provider advised that the outdoor sinks were used mainly to remove heavy mud from the children’s hands during mucky play.

Each care room had a fridge, for storage of lunch boxes with perishable food during term time.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was safely stored in the office in the outdoor portacabin. The staff members were familiar with the practices required for the administration of medication to children attending the service as observed through the administration of medication records reviewed.

Fire Safety:

All fire exits were clear of obstruction and clearly marked.

A notice showing the fire assembly point in the garden was on display.

Staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service.

Fire exits were unobstructed.

Outing:

An outings policy was in place to guide staff when undertaking an outing with the children. The registered provider advised the inspector that the staff take the senior preschool group on outings each year. Most recently, the children and staff went to Laois Forest School. A risk assessment, check list and parental consent forms were completed prior to the outing taking place.