

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH056
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Name of Service:	Forever Friends Pre-school
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Address of Service:	Fairyhouse Racecourse, Ratoath, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A85 XK30
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Name of Registered Provider:	Audrey Fitzpatrick
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	03/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	Not applicable.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5, The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15
Inspection undertaken by:	Y Kelly
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

Forever Friends Pre-school is privately owned and provides a sessional service from 9:30 am to 1.00pm to children ranging in age from 2 to 6 years. Eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE). The service consists of 2 care rooms: the Green room and the Yellow room, sanitary facilities and a small kitchen.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a deputy person in charge and 6 early years staff. There were 6 staff present on the day of the inspection including the registered provider. Three members of staff are employed in the service to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs, in a post which is funded by the minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). There is one relief staff member to provide cover for staff in the service.

Methodology

Tusla 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 the regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Green Room and the Yellow Room.

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, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*

(c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09.40am and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The files for 8 adults including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was recorded:

(a) Fourteen written validated references were available from past employers.

(b) Two written validated references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 8 adults whose files were reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring the service to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International Police vetting was available for 1 adult who had lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 8 staff members whose files were reviewed and who may work directly with the children in the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of the inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Green room there were 3 staff members working with 14 children aged 2 years 8 months to 4 years 10 months, one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. The registered provider and the deputy manager worked directly with the children in this room.
- In the Yellow room there were 3 staff members working with 10 children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years 6 months, two of whom were employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

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 following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Mealtimes were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Staff sat and ate with the children at snack time and engaged in conversations with the children. Children's lunches and water bottles were brought from home. Snack consisted of cheese and ham sandwiches, rolls, crackers,

cucumber, pasta, yoghurts and fruit. The staff discussed that children’s water bottles and lunches are accessible to the children in the fridge in the care rooms if required before snack time.

- Children’s independence was supported. Children also used the bathroom independently with staff support as needed. Children were given responsibilities such as helping to give out the children’s placemats, lunch boxes and drink bottles at snack time.
- Children were free to move around the care room and choose materials independently and children were asked “What do you want to play with?”
- All the children attending the service were given the opportunity to spend time in the outdoor area during the inspection. Children from the Yellow room spent time playing in the outdoor area on ride on bikes and ride in cars and building with foam blocks, whilst children from the Green room went for a walk around the grounds of the service.

Supporting relationships and interactions around children:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service. The early years practitioners demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child’s individual needs and supported children’s inclusion and involvement in play. Children were supported with solution-based problem solving during interactive play. Children were given the opportunity to spend time indoors if preferred during outdoor play time.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, each child had their own coat hook identified by children’s names and photographs of the children. Children’s artwork was displayed in the care rooms.
- Staff discussed that they communicate with parents to share information using an online messaging application.
- The staff members were observed greeting parents at the door at collection time where they exchanged information about the child’s day in the service.

Physical and material environment:

- The furniture provided in the care rooms was low level and appropriate to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care rooms. Toys and equipment were visible and accessible to children on low level shelving which facilitated children’s independence in play. The Green room and the Yellow room were divided into different areas of interest which provided opportunities for a variety of spontaneous

play experiences and choice for children. There were cosy/book areas with a bench and sofas with blankets, cushions for children to sit and relax and a selection of books which supported storytelling opportunities and children's language development. There were creative areas with art materials to include paper, paint palettes and paint brushes, pencils and stencils, crayons, chalk, glue and glitter to support creative art and mark making for children.

There was a home corner with kitchen and play food, small world items such as dolls house with furniture, dolls, and people, animals and dinosaurs, garage and transportation toys to support imaginative and interactive play. There were construction materials to include plastic building bricks and wooden blocks.

There were tabletop materials such as jigsaws, pegboards and threading to support fine motor development and puzzles and games to support early numeracy learning.

Two fully enclosed outdoor areas are located to the rear of the service. There were ride on bikes, ride on cars and ride in cars, see-saw and scooters which promoted gross motor and fundamental movement skills. There was a house which supported dramatic play and foam building blocks which provided opportunities for construction and co-operative play. There was a separate area surfaced with grass and a gravel path with 2 slides, wooden kitchen and 2 sandpits. There was another small outdoor area at the side of the building with 2 wooden kitchens and a sand tray.

Programme of Activities:

- The children practiced their nativity play and songs for the Christmas concert being held for the parents.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; children were given verbal and visual cues using a timer in both indoor and outdoor environments to support them with the transitions. Visual schedules were used to support transitions. The children engaged well with tidying up and tidied away play materials when they had finished. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.
- Staff facilitated story time, song times and a yoga session with the children.

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:

- On arrival to the service, the inspector observed that the door was secure and monitored by staff.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The large outdoor play areas to the rear of the service were fully enclosed and secured, one area was surfaced with concrete and the other area with grass.
- Daily risk assessments were kept for both indoor and outdoor environments.

Infection Control:

- Children's lunch which was brought from home, were refrigerated to prevent spoiling of perishable items.
- Children were observed to hand wash before lunchtime, and this was encouraged and supported by staff.

Administration of Medication:

- No child required medication to be administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
- (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and a staff member trained in FAR was available on the premises throughout the opening hours of the service. Five staff members were trained in First Aid Response (FAR), four of whom were present on the day of the inspection.

- (2)(a) An adequately stocked first aid box was observed in both care rooms of the service.
 (b) The first aid box was stored out of the reach of the children but available to staff as needed.

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) The registered provider ensured the following:
- (a) A record of monthly fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on 5 November 2025.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on 2 September 2025. Fire alarm and detection system was last serviced on 14 November 2025.
 - (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 30 children for the morning session with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.