

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH169		
Name of Service:	Scribbles & Giggles Pre-School		
Address of Service:	Knightswood, Matthews Lane, Drogheda, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A92 X008		
Name of Registered Provider:	Melanie Branigan		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	25/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	48	PM 26
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath C15 CP23		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Taaffe		
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		

Description of service

Scribbles and Giggles Pre-school was established by the registered provider in 2009 and is registered to accommodate pre-school children aged 2 – 6 years on a sessional and part-time basis and to provide a school age childcare service for children up to 12 years of age. The service operates for 38 weeks each year and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme each weekday morning. The pre-school service is registered to operate from 8.45am to 2.15pm with no pre-school child staying for longer than 5 hours within this timeframe. The service is conducted from a purpose built premises located in a residential area on the outskirts of Drogheda town with three care rooms in operation, namely ECCE Room 1, ECCE Room 2 and ECCE Room 3. A separate spacious sensory room is also provided on the premises. Outdoor play is facilitated in the spacious outdoor play area to the side of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is present and in charge of the service on a daily basis and employs a total of 17 staff members, including an assistant manager and a further 14 staff members who work directly with the pre-school children (of whom 7 are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model scheme), a cook, an administrator and a staff member who engages in cleaning duties in advance of caring for the school aged children each afternoon.

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. 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 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. The assistant manager was appointed to deputise in the role of person in charge when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 9.30am on the day of inspection and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

A total of 18 staff files were reviewed, maintained in respect of the registered provider and all 17 staff members employed in the service.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for the 18 adults whose files were reviewed.

(a) Twenty-six written references were from past employers.

(b) Ten written references were from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and for the 17 staff members. Each of these records demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for the 2 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) The registered provider and all 14 staff members who work directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 – 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister 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) On the day of inspection the number of adults working directly with the children attending the service was correct and above the minimum recommended ratio of adults to children to meet the requirement of this regulation.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed when the highest number of children were in attendance in each room during the inspection:

- In ECCE Room 1 there were 16 pre-school children aged 3 years 1 month to 5 years being cared for by 5 staff members, of whom 3 staff were employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and when necessary to work directly with children with additional needs, in posts which were funded or part-funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. Five of the 16 children were attending the service on a sessional basis on the day of inspection.
- In ECCE Room 2 there were 16 pre-school children aged 2 years 8 month to 5 years 1 month being cared for by 4 staff members, of whom 2 staff were employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and when necessary to work directly with children with additional needs, in posts which were funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. Seven of the 16 children were attending the service on a sessional basis on the day of inspection.
- In ECCE Room 3 there were 16 pre-school children aged 3 years 7 month to 5 years being cared for by 4 staff members, of whom 2 staff were employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and when necessary to work directly with children with additional needs, in posts which were funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. Ten of the 16 children were attending the service on a sessional basis on the day of inspection.

No child stayed on the premises for longer than 5 hours within the service's operating hours of 8.45am to 2.15pm as evidenced in the reviewed attendance records maintained in the service and as confirmed by the registered provider and staff members.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in 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) The following are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs of the Children:

- The staff members spoke positively and warmly to and about the children during the inspection and demonstrated that they knew the children well, recognising and valuing their individual preferences, interests and needs.
- Snacks and drinks were provided by the parents for the children. Children were observed having their snack either individually or in small, self-selected groups at a time of their own choosing and serving themselves under the discreet supervision and support of staff members, rather than all being seated at the same time.
- The staff members were observed to be responsive to the children's cues, should they need to use the toilet, with supervision provided and assistance when required. Nappies were changed promptly when required and staff members were heard using this time as an opportunity for warm one to one interactions.
- There was an emphasis on outdoor play and learning in the service and the children could choose if they wished to play inside or outside during their attendance, and to move freely between the two spaces.

Supporting Relationships around Children

- In both the outdoor and indoor play environment the staff members were observed acting as play partners and engaging in activities with the children at an individual, small group and large group level. The staff members were observed affirming and offering meaningful praise and encouragement to the children for their efforts and involvement in activities.

- Positive regard was consistently shown by the staff members towards children with additional needs in the service, fostering each child’s inclusion and involvement in activities. Examples of this, underpinned by the child-led approach utilised in the service, were demonstrated by staff members in each room displaying anticipation and appropriate responsiveness when children experienced challenges within the environment and when children chose to change or opt out of activities. The children were observed being supported to develop a sense of personal and cultural identity, as evidenced in the staff members using words and phrases in a number of languages when communicating with children during the inspection.
- The inspector observed that children’s transitions were supported. Visual and verbal strategies were used by the staff members to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities and movement. A pictorial display of the daily routine and activities was on display at the children’s eye level in the pre-school rooms. One child was in their settling-in phase in the ECCE Room 2 on the day of inspection. The staff members explained how they were assisting this child to transition from home to the service smoothly by actions such as short days of attendance.
- Children's behaviour was observed to be skilfully managed in a positive and caring manner as the staff members were observed being calm and supportive when using age- and stage-appropriate strategies including re-direction, distraction and a problem-solving approach to effectively address the minor issues of conflict that arose.
- There was evidence of strong family engagement with the service. Information in relation to the children’s learning and development was shared with parents in a number of ways including informally at drop-off and collection times on a daily basis, electronically through a secure smartphone messenger application, by email and through social media. Parents were invited to visit the service on a number of occasions throughout the year with photographs on display showing parents and their children engaged in play activities in the service and, in addition, grandparents were invited to attend the service for a day of celebration each year.

Physical and material environment:

- The layout of the pre-school rooms facilitated children to make choices and initiate self-directed play and activities with the wide array of play materials and equipment positioned at a level that was accessible to the pre-school children. The pre-school rooms were set up in clearly defined interest areas which included home areas, shop areas, hairdressers, arts and crafts stations with recyclable materials,

construction areas and well-resourced library areas. A real-life child-sized home environment was established in the smaller interconnecting room adjoining ECCE Room 1 which contained wooden kitchen units equipped with real world utensils and appliances, a real-life stove and couch, houseplants, a clothes rail with dolls clothing and an array of dolls and baby care items.

- The service placed an emphasis on ensuring the children’s homes, families, cultures and communities were reflected in the pre-school environment. This was evidenced in the dolls, figurines, jigsaws, books, dress-up clothes and real life food packaging provided in the home corners. Representations of the children, their families and their learning experiences were very visible as evidenced through the broad range of photographs on display in the service.
- There was a broad range of books available in the service to support the children’s language development. Additionally relevant themed books were laid out in the individual interest areas to support the children’s interest and engagement in the topics.
- Well-resourced sand tables and water tables, dried rice trays, and a range of playdough were provided in each room and the children were observed engaged in these sensory play experiences when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. The separate spacious sensory room contained a range of equipment including soft play areas, a spacious ball pool, fibre optic lighting and an enclosed den, all of which provided for an enhanced sensory experience for the children.
- The fully enclosed spacious outdoor play area provided to the side of the premises was mainly covered in artificial grass and was accessed directly from each of the 3 care rooms. The space was well resourced with equipment and materials to facilitate outdoor play experiences for the children. The play equipment included sand tables, water tables, large wooden and plastic blocks, rubber bricks, lengths of timber, balance beams, a large free standing 4-in-a-row frame, sit-in playhouses, tyres and children’s seating and benches. An open-sided lean-to structure was in place along the perimeter of the premises which provided shelter for the children and staff members

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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered provider and staff members to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service:

General Safety:

- The entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The outdoor play area was enclosed by boundary walls and a latched gate to prevent unauthorised persons from gaining entry or a child from gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger.
- The water temperature in the care rooms and sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.
- Cleaning agents and medications were stored safely and out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- The premises and play materials were in a clean condition and up to date cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- The children's snacks were stored in a refrigerator in each pre-school room which reduced the risk of bacteria multiplying in the meat and dairy produce provided by the parents or guardians from home.
- Suitable handwashing facilities including thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap, and paper hand towels provided in motion-activated dispensers were available in the sanitary accommodation.
- Children were facilitated to wash their hands after having their nappies changed, after using the toilet, before eating and after outdoor and messy play.
- A pedal operated lidded nappy bin was provided for the disposal of nappies. This reduced odour emissions and the risk of cross-infection.
- The outdoor sand tables were fitted with secure lids to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- No child was observed sleeping during the inspection. Stackable beds were available to be used in the event that a child needed to sleep when present in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present in attendance records provided in each care room, noting each child's arrival and departure times.

(3)(a)(b) The service ensured that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the premises. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspector was requested to record her attendance in the service and the purpose of her visit.

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 a person with in-date first aid response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service as evidenced in the staff files and the service's staff roster.
- (2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes provided in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations in each care room on the premises, available for the children in attendance in the event of an emergency.

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 record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 15/01/2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in February 2024 and the smoke detection system on 13/02/2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the pre-school rooms and ancillary accommodation in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 64 children. The in-date policy showed that the part-time service was insured until 27/03/2025.