

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY021
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Name of Service:	Play Pals
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Address of Service:	Cloneygowan Hall, Cloneygowan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 T020
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fran Hyland
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	NA
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O' Connor Hughes
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

The service is registered as a sessional service to accommodate twenty-eight children. The service operates on a Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. An Early Education and Care programme is provided from 09:15 to 12:45. The age range of children attending the service is 2 to 6 years of age.

The Early Years' Service is located in a single storey parish hall. Two pre-school rooms are provided, the playroom and the rainbow room. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. The service is located in a rural area of Cloneygowan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

Staffing

The registered provider and five adults were working directly with the children on the 27 January 2025.

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.

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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was sent to the registered provider in respect of Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child on the 28 January 2025. The response received from the registered provider was accepted by Tusla.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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)

A designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

Clear management structures were displayed in the pre-school service.

Six staff files including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers or from a source other than a previous employer in respect of the staff members.

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The registered provider ensured that vetting procedures were carried out prior to staff employment in the service.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)

The ratio of adults to children was adequate during the inspection.

(3)

There were twenty-six children attending the service supervised directly by the registered provider and five staff members.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)
In a review of twenty-eight child enrolment records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g) was available in respect of children attending the service.

(h)
One child enrolment record held a record of immunisations received.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(h)
Twenty-seven child enrolment records did not have details of immunisations received by the children attending the service.

(i)
Twenty-eight child enrolment records did not have written parental consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(h)

All parents/carers of the children attending the setting was contacted and asked to produce and send in children's immunisation passports and all immunisation passports are now on file in the setting.

Management have purchased the child record books and this will be prevented from happening in the future as all parents/carers will be given a booklet to have filled out before the child starts preschool and the immunisation consent included in the booklet.

(1)(i)

Immediately permission slips were written up for parental consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency and given to all parents, these were signed and returned back to the service and are now on file.

This particular parental consent form is included in the child record books purchased and will be given to all parents/carers to sign.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector addressed the non-compliance.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*

- (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)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j)(k).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

A parent leaflet was available in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The parental information reviewed did not include the required information in respect of Regulation 16(1)(a) to (g).

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor.
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services.
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service.
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service.
- (e) the facilities available.
- (f) the opening hours and fees.
- (g) policies, procedures and statements required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A complete review and updated information for parents /carers is being done and will be including all information as proposed in Regulation 16 (a) to (g).

Complete review and update the information for parents/carers and will be given to each parent before the child attends the setting.

Supporting documentation submitted

Parent information booklet.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector addressed the non-compliance.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations was available and open to inspection by (a) (b) and (c).

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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Children were happily engaged in the various play experiences and activities including creative, sensory, free play and manipulative play in both the playroom and rainbow room supported by the staff members. Children enjoyed a song and dance session in the playroom.

Children enjoyed a healthy snack provided by their parents consisting of sandwiches, crackers, cheese and a selection of fruit with water to drink. Children enjoyed their snack and took their time conversing with their peers.

Staff members held children in positive regard using their individual names, interacting and conversing with children at eye level. A key person system was in operation in the service. Staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Access and Inclusion plans were in place for children requiring extra support. Staff gave children choices as to what activity they participated in. Minor behaviour management issues were handled by staff in a positive caring manner. Staff sat with children working with them at small group tabletop activities in the pre-school room. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

The service worked in partnership with parents in the following ways: A short messaging system (SMS) is used to send information and updates to parents. The child's learning journal depicting the child's developmental observations, play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

The indoor environment in the pre-school rooms provided a range of developmentally appropriate, creative and enriching experiences for all children. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. Children were observed to alternate between the playroom and rainbow rooms to avail of the areas of interest that included a home area, rest area, construction area and dolls houses. The playroom was large in nature and allowed for freedom of movement for physical and active play activities. Children's artwork and photographs were noted.

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.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Adequate and suitable play equipment and materials were provided in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

(b)

Two couches were provided in the service for children to rest and relax.

(4)

The outdoor play area was safe and secure surrounded by fencing. A natural grass and absorbent surface area was noted. Toys and equipment included a large wooden climbing frame with steps and a slide, two playhouses, a mud kitchen, tyres and scooters.

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 safe and secure. Access to the service was by means of a doorbell and the inside door was locked with a bolt mechanism. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning records were available and reviewed.

The premises was visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Records for cleaning were available and reviewed.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet.

Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation in the service.

Mechanical ventilation was working in the sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely in the playroom.

Fire Safety:

The fire emergency exits were free from obstruction in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety

Written parental consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency was not available for the children enrolled in the service including a child with a defined medical condition.

An immediate action notice was sent to the registered provider in respect of Regulation 23 on the 28 January 2025. The response received from the registered provider was accepted.

Fire Safety:

There was no fire assembly point notice displayed in the outdoor area to indicate where staff and children should assemble in the event of a fire in the premises.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety

Immediately permission slips were written up for parental consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency and given to all parents, these were signed and returned back to the service and are now on file. This particular parental consent form is included in the child record books purchased will be given to all parents/carers to sign.

Fire Safety:

A fire assembly point sign was purchased immediately and erected at the designated point outside the setting. The fire assembly point sign has been permanently erected on the designated assembly point and will be maintained for damage/theft in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector addressed the non-compliance.

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 records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)(b)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by a staff member.

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)

Three adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises for the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was located in the pre-school room.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)

The first aid box was not stocked in line with TUSLA requirements as outlined in the Quality Regulatory Framework document.

- The normal saline solution was out of date.
- The burns dressing was out of date.
- The medium bandages were out of date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Management immediately discarded the first aid box that was present on the day and replaced it with one purchased which is fully stocked.

Management will regularly check stock and dates of the contents in the first aid box and restock and refill if necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of first aid box and contents.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector addressed the non-compliance.

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)

There was a record of fire drills carried out in the service. The last fire drill was carried out on the 16 January 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on the 31 January 2024 and 21 January 2025 respectively.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were noted in a conspicuous location in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

Compliance Information

Children were under adult supervision when playing in the playroom and rainbow room and using the sanitary facilities. Children were observed to be handed over to their parent/guardian at collection time by the staff member.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.