

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015OY024 |
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| Name of Service: | Skippy's Childcare Service Limited |
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| Address of Service: | Ferbane Street, Cloghan, Co. Offaly |
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| Eircode: | R42 KP71 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Mary Behan |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| Date(s) of Inspection: | 19/02/2026 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 33 | PM | 16 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co. Offaly |
| Inspection undertaken by: | A Spain |
| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable. |
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Description of service

Skippy's Childcare Service is a full day care service caring for children in the age range 0 to 6 years between the hours of 8.30am and 5.30pm. The service is currently caring for children between the age range 1 year to 6 years. The service is located in a two-storey standalone building in Cloghan, west Offaly. Rooms in use in the service include a baby room, toddler room, playroom 4, sleep room, kitchen, sanitary accommodation for children and staff, a nappy changing station located at ground floor level. Playroom 3, sanitary accommodation for children and an office are located at first floor level. Outdoor play areas are located at the back, front and side of the service. A school age service is also provided between 2.00 and 5.30pm during school terms and between 8.30am and 5.30pm outside of school terms.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 14 staff members. Thirteen staff provide direct care to the children and a cook is employed to prepare meals for the children attending on a full day care basis. The registered provider works in the service.

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 regulations

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4) – Management and Recruitment.
- Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service.
- Regulation 11(1)(2) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 16 (1)(h)(i)(k) – Records in relation to pre-school service.
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child.
- Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid.
- Regulation 26(1) (a) (b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

The scope of the inspection included all rooms in use in the service.

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
- (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)

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

(b)

Both the designated person in charge and the named person to deputise as required were present in the service on the day of inspection

(c)

The service had a clear management structure with key workers assigned to care for children in designated rooms.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and validated references from past employers were held on file in respect of two staff members. A validated reference from a past employer and a validated reference from a reputable source were held on file in respect of 7 staff members. Two written and validated references from reputable sources were held on file in respect of four staff members. Two references from reputable sources were held on file in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the 14 staff working in the service and the registered provider. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in respect of four staff members. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

Police vetting was held on file in respect of one staff member who had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Records held on file confirmed that the staff working directly with children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education varying from level 5 to level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

Written and validated references were not available in respect of one staff member working in the service.

(3)

Records showed that the necessary vetting procedures were not conducted prior to the appointment of all staff members to work in the service as two validated written references were not available in respect of one staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and validated references from reputable sources were submitted by the registered provider in respect of one staff member on the 29 March 2026. As a preventive measure, a procedure has been put in place to ensure that all of the necessary procedures to complete vetting for all new staff will be completed before staff

commence work in the service. As a further preventive measure, a copy of the excel sheet developed by the registered provider to record dates staff references were issued, validated and staff appointed to work in the service was submitted on 13 April 2026.

(3)
The registered provider advised in the response submitted on 29 March 2026 that a tick list has been put in place for each staff member to both record and to ensure that each step of the vetting process is carried out prior to the appointment of all new staff to work in the service and for existing staff in respect of renewal of Garda vetting disclosures.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(a)(b)

Copies of the written references and the validation dates in respect to one staff member.

Summary Comment

The measures taken by the registered provider and submissions received by the inspectorate have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection under Regulation 9(2)(a)(b) and 9(3) Management and recruitment.

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 inspector reviewed the following policies which were found to be in keeping with the requirements of schedule 5.

The policy on Accidents and Incidents
The Complaints Policy.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults cared for the children in attendance across the four care rooms in use on the day of inspection.

(2)

Throughout the morning in the service:

Two adults cared for two babies aged 1 to 2 years and present for a full day care service in the baby room.

Two adults cared for seven children aged 2 to 3 years in the toddler room in the service.

Three adults cared for 15 children aged 3 to 4 years in ECCE room 4 at ground floor level.

Two adults cared for 9 children aged 4 to 5 years in ECCE room 3 at first floor level.

In the afternoon;

One adult cared for the two babies aged 1 to 2 years in the baby room.

One adult cared for the 3 toddlers aged 2 to 3 years remaining in the service for full day care in the toddler room.

An additional adult provided cover between the baby and toddler room as required.

Two adults cared for 7 children aged 3 to 5 years in the afternoon sessional service in room three.

Two adults cared for 4 children aged 4 to 5 years remaining for full day care and two school going children in room 4 at ground floor level.

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;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)(h) Attendance registers were maintained in all of the four playrooms to record the daily arrival and departure time of children. A review of the attendance register in the toddler room at 12.21 pm confirmed that the four children who had gone home were signed out.

(i) A staff roster was maintained to detail the attendance of staff rostered to work in the rooms.

(k) Accident and Incident record books were maintained in the playrooms to record accidents and incidents involving preschool children. A sample of 6 completed records was reviewed for accidents and incidents that occurred between April 2025 and February 2026. The records reviewed were in keeping with the requirements of the Accident and Incident policy 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) The morning snack in all playrooms was provided from home. In playroom four, children sat at tables while the “two helpers” for the day handed out lunches stored in the refrigerator in the adjoining kitchenette. Children and staff engaged in leisurely conversation as children ate their sandwiches, crackers, yogurts and fresh fruit including oranges, apple pieces, strawberries and watermelon. A Jug of water and beakers were provided for children to have a drink with their snack. The staff were observed to praise the “helpers” who were assigned to

hand out lunches to their peers. Staff sat with the children and engaged the children in conversation during meals observed.

Children in playroom three were observed eating sandwiches, wraps, crackers, yogurts and bananas with water to drink during break time. During break, children and staff listened to “Hello Mr. Pancake” from the speaker in the room and talked about making pancakes when the story was over.

Children in the baby room were safely seated in highchairs for their crackers, sandwiches, apple pieces and yogurts at 12.00 while staff talked to the children and allowed both children time to finish eating at their own pace. The children were observed to enjoy painting on paper with sponges after mealtime.

The two staff and children in the toddler room sat to relax and chat at 12.21pm as children ate sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts. The children were observed to enjoy singing songs in a group setting with staff during the course of the inspection.

Children in playrooms three and four were observed to be supported by staff for handwashing after outdoor play and before snack times in the service.

Soft floor mats, low level couches and books on low level open shelving units were provided in all of the playrooms for children to take a break from activities and rest as required in the service. Three standard cots were provided in sleep room off the baby room for children to sleep in when required. Low level beds were stored in a storeroom off the toddler room for children to rest and sleep in the room after snack time in the service. A full size couch, cushions and a rug were provided in playroom four for older children to rest and relax during their day in the service.

Children cared for in the four playrooms were observed to avail of outdoor play on the day of inspection. The children in playroom four were divided into three groups “Birdies”, “Bunnies” and “Bears” and taken out on a rotational basis from the room to play in the outdoor play area directly off the room, while the children remaining in the room availed of free play. Children cared for in both the baby and toddler rooms played under the open shelter in a separate play area at the side of the premises. Children engaged in imaginary play baking with bark pieces at the mud kitchen and offered the visiting inspector strawberry ice cream from the sandbox in this area. Children cared for in playroom three were observed enjoying energetic play in the outdoor play area at the back of the service, in the afternoon in the service.

Family and community walls were posted in the playrooms with pictures from both home settings and buildings in the community town. Children’s copies, scrapbooks and learning journals were maintained to share observations on children’s interests, their strengths, development and care needs with parents and guardians. Parents were

also furnished with monthly newsletters to highlight information on the service and any significant events, including marking of festive occasions in the service.

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

Low level tables and chairs were provided in all playrooms for children to sit for play activities, for breaks and to relax as necessary. Play equipment and toys were organised in home corners, construction areas, messy play areas, art areas and areas for floor play. Toys and play equipment were located on open low-level shelving for children to see and choose toys to engage in play activities of their choice.

Four separate play areas were provided outdoors. A tarmac area at the front of the service provided a smooth surface for children to play on ride on and push along toys. An area surrounded by a high-level concrete wall provided a suitable area for children to engage in energetic outdoor play. The enclosed area at the side of the premises was provided with a mud kitchen, large sand box, tyres used for planting boxes and bark to play and dig with. A timber open shelter with a Perspex roof, in this area provided a suitable area for children to play during inclement weather. The outdoor play area at the back of the premises had an all-weather surface. Slides, a balancing bridge, a mud kitchen, a timber train anchored to the ground and playhouses were observed in this outdoor play area. Storage sheds were provided outdoors to store toys during poor weather conditions and to rotate toys not in everyday use.

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 secured and a doorbell provided to facilitate access. The outdoor play areas were safely fenced in by timber fencing, a high-level concrete wall and a stone wall at the side of the premises. Cleaning agents were stored in a high-level press in the kitchen off the baby room, and on a high-level shelf in the lobby area off playroom three on the first floor. A reserve supply of cleaning agents was stored in a locked shed in the yard area. A stairgate was provided between the baby room and the kitchen to prevent children from gaining access to the kitchen area. A high-level latch was provided on the door in playroom three at first floor level leading to the stairs and ground floor level to guard against unsupervised access of children from the room. The oil boiler was enclosed by timber fencing at the side of the premises and records indicated an annual service was conducted on 10 June 2025. Mops and buckets were stored at the back of the premises in an area outside of the outdoor play space

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap, disposable paper towels and foot pedal operated bins were provided adjacent to the toilets and nappy changing area. Nappies, individual creams, and wipes were stored at the nappy changing station off the baby room. Disposable plastic aprons and gloves were provided for staff use during nappy changing and disinfectant was stored on a high-level window cill to clean the changing mat after nappy changing. Both the nappy changing policy and procedure were posted on the wall in the nappy changing area. Records of completed cleaning schedules were on display in the playrooms and toilet areas. The rooms and play equipment were observed to be clean and well maintained. An outside cleaning service was availed of daily after operational hours in the service to assist with the daily cleaning of floors and toilet areas.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Temperature reducing medication was stored in the kitchen in the service. The registered provider advised that there were no children cared for in the service at present who were on prescribed medication.

Safe Sleep:

A staff member was observed to stay in the room when children slept on low level beds in the toddler room to monitor and supervise sleeping children. A sleep log was maintained in the baby room to record ten-minute sleep checks, daily sleep patterns, position, skin colour and room temperature in the cot room while children slept. A viewing panel was provided between the baby room and the sleep room. The room temperature in the baby sleep room was recorded at 16°C on the day of inspection while children slept.

Fire Safety:

The front and back door exits were unobstructed on the day of inspection and fire signage was provided over exit doors. A fire assembly point was posted on the timber fence in the outdoor play area at the front of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Garda vetting was available for four staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice "EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda vetting".

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

One renewed Garda vetting disclosure was received with the response of 29 March 2026, and it was advised that the outstanding Garda vetting disclosures will be submitted on receipt. The three remaining renewed Garda vetting disclosures were submitted on the 13 April 2026.

As a preventive measure, it was advised that an excel sheet has been developed by the service to track Garda vetting expiry dates. As a further preventive measure, it was advised in the response of 29 March 2026, that applications to renew Garda vetting disclosures will be submitted to the National Vetting Bureau of an Garda Síochana three months in advance of expiry dates to ensure compliance with this regulation.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

The registered provider submitted a copy of the excel sheet adapted by the service to record staff names, dates Garda vetting disclosures secured, dates Garda vetting disclosures expire, and dates Garda vetting applications will be resubmitted for renewal.

Summary Comment

The measures taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23.

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)
A staff member with First Aid Responder (FAR) training with an expiry date of 25 November 2027 was available in the service.

(2)(a)(b)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were which were easily accessible and available to staff caring for the children attending the service, were located on high level shelves in all playrooms and in the front hallway in the service.

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 of fire drills as conducted in the service was maintained. The last monthly fire drills were recorded as conducted on 3 February 2026 in room four, on 16 February 2026 in room three and on the 17 February 2026 in the baby and toddler rooms.

(b)

The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment confirmed that an annual service was conducted in February 2026. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system confirmed that the last service was conducted on 13 November 2025.

(4)

A child friendly fire drill procedure was posted on the wall in each playroom.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 44 children in daily attendance in a full day care service.