

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY068
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Name of Service:	Marian Junior Pre-School
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Address of Service:	New Road, Erry, Clara, Co Offaly
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Eircode:	T35 ET88
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mairead Sheedy
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	01/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	5	PM	5
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, 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

This Early Years' Service provides a full day care service for children with an intellectual disability and is one of a multiple operated by Muiríosa Foundation Limited by Guarantee. The age range of children enrolled in the services 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates from 09:00 to 14:00 on a Monday to Friday basis.

The service is located in an adapted domestic dwelling in New Road, Clara, Co Offaly. There are five pre-school rooms namely the classroom, dining room, sensory room, therapy room, playroom and a kitchen and office. There is an outdoor play area at the rear of the service. Onsite car parking facilities are located to the front of the service.

Staffing

The designated person in charge and six staff members were working directly with children on the 1 May 2025. A staff member has a dual role as carer and cleaner. The registered provider does not work with children.

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

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

(b)

The designated person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was clear indication of persons in charge displayed in the service.

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

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available in respect of nine staff members and the registered provider from previous employers or sources other than a previous employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members and the registered provider.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

Staff vetting procedures were carried out correctly prior to the employment of a staff member in the service.

(4)

The staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or an equivalent deemed by the Minister.

(7)(a)

Staff had read and signed the policies and procedures of the service.

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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was exceeded during the inspection.

(2)

Five children were in attendance supervised directly by six adults.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a pre-school child shall not be-

(a) permitted access to the internet,

(b) photographed, or

(c) recorded

while attending the pre-school service other than in accordance with the terms of the consent of a parent or guardian given in the form specified in the service's policy on the use of the internet and photographic and recording devices.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. Children enjoyed singing, rhymes and actions and marching with ribbons in the group activity room supported by staff. Staff worked with children on a one-to-one basis during play and work activities. One child was observed to enjoy a walk in the buggy in the fresh air supervised by the staff member. Children had settled in well in their new service and enjoyed freedom of movement in the large spacious rooms available to them.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact, conversed and sang with the children during play activities, toileting and mealtimes. Lámh a manual sign system was used as a communication method for some children. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff members as staff worked well together. Staff meetings are held on a monthly basis and evidence of the staff meetings were available for review.

The pre-school rooms were bright and colourful. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences to meet children's learning needs was available in the pre-school rooms. Areas of interest included a home area, dress up, and a farm area. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. Children's individual specialised equipment was available to them in pre-school rooms. Children's photographs of their group activities were displayed in the corridor of the service. The outdoor play area was located at the back of the service and consisted of a grass and tarmac surface. Two large swings were noted. Toys and outdoor play equipment are stored in the shed.

There is an open-door policy in place for parents as the service works in partnership with parents and guardians. A verbal handover is given on collection. Communication between parents and the service was shared via a daily report depicting the child's daily routine. Information is shared with parents electronically or via a short messaging system (SMS) on a regular basis. Each child had their own learning journal depicting their play and work activities. Child development observations are carried out on a monthly basis and noted in the journal which will be shared with parents at the end of the pre -school term. A questionnaire was sent to the parents by the service in 2025 seeking feedback about the service provision for the children.

(1)(b)

Individual care plans and educational plans were in place for children identifying children's individual development needs in consultation with the parents, staff and multidisciplinary team. Daily reports, one to one reports, monthly progress reports, attendance records and a personal history with medication administration was maintained for each child. Parents provided foods that suited their child's dietary needs. Staff assisted children with eating and encouraged independence for children to feed themselves where possible. Regular nappy changing was carried out during the inspection. Children were assisted and encouraged to toilet train by staff.

Individual needs led sleep was in place for children to sleep in the cosy bed in the sensory room. The staff member stayed with the child to observe the child while sleeping.

(2)(3)

Positive behaviour strategies were observed during the inspection. Staff used a calm approach using soft language tones, giving positive praise and encouragement to children. Reassurance and calming techniques were used where appropriate by staff.

(4)

The designated person in charge stated that consent is obtained from the parents in respect of (a)(b)(c).