

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN029
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Name of Service:	Juniper Tree Autism Services Ltd.
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Address of Service:	21 Mill Cross Road, Bealnamulla, Athlone, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	N37 HF59
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Mulligan
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/05/2025
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Date 2 of Inspection:	21/05/2025
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No of pre-school children: Day 1	AM	7	PM	0
Day 2	AM	8	PM	0

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Kennedy
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 ground floor part time service is in a semi-detached premises, in a housing development in the town of Athlone, Co. Roscommon. There are 2 playrooms namely Pre-school 1 and Pre-school 2. There is a sensory room, a kitchenette, and sanitary areas. The pre-school offers a morning or an afternoon part time care programme between 9.00hrs to 13.00hrs and from 13.30hrs to 17.30hrs. Quiet rest areas with child size seating are available for children to rest or opt out of an activity if he/ she wishes to do so. There is a secure outdoor play area to the rear of the premises. The pre-school provides a bespoke service for a child of autism following early intervention and an assessment of need. Additionally, a school age programme is provided

Staffing

The registered provider is supernumerary and does not work in the premises. There are five staff in the premises daily. There is a designated person in charge, who does not work directly with the children and five staff, who work directly with the 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 days 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.*

(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

(2)(a)(b) Six staff files were reviewed.

Twelve of the twelve written validated references, on file for the six staff, were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for six staff. The service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required for four of the adults as they had not resided outside the jurisdiction over the age of 18 years of age for a period in excess of six months.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) There is a named designated person in charge however, on both days of the inspection, this person was not in attendance and the inspector was advised that the classroom manager was the deputy designated person in charge. The service did not advise the agency or have this information on display to advise the parents/guardians of the children attending of the deputy designated person in charge of operating the preschool service.

(1)(b)(c) There is no clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

The management structure did not clearly identify the details of the designated deputy person in charge in event of the absence of the named person in charge during the hours of operation of the preschool service.

(2) The registered providers file was not available for inspection.

(2)(d) It could not be ascertained if one adult required police vetting as there were gaps in their employment history.

(4) The qualification details were not available for inspection for the five adults working directly with the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person in charge submitted a written response to advise

Corrective Action

(1)(a) A list of people in charge has been displayed on the notice board in entrance hall.

(1)(b)(c) The management structure has been displayed on the notice board in entrance hall.

(2) The registered providers file was in the filing cabinet on the day of the inspection. The designated deputy person in charge omitted to give it to the inspector as the registered provider is not a member of staff.

(2)(d) One staff member was requested to revise the cv.to advise of the gaps.

(4) Qualifications for all staff are on the premises .

Preventive Action

- (1)(a) Management to ensure the list is up to date and displayed.
- (1)(b)(c) Management to ensure the list is up to date and displayed.
- (2) Management to ensure the designated deputy in charge is properly trained Re: regulations etc.
- (2)(d) Management to ensure C.V.'s from potential staff are up to date with no gaps in employment history
- (4) Management to ensure all staff files have a copy staff qualification.

Supporting documentation submitted

The person in charge submitted photographic and documentary evidence of

- (1)(a) the list of people in charge on display in the entrance hall.
- (1)(b)(c) the management structure on display in the entrance hall.
- (2) the registered provider's file.
- (2)(d) updated CV of one staff member.
- (4) qualification details for five adults employed in the service

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the deputy person in charge ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) Documentary evidence in the form of staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the 16th of May, there were 7 pre-school children aged between 3 to 5 years. There were 5 staff working directly with the children.

On the morning of the 21st of May there were 8 preschool children aged between 3-5 years. There were 5 staff working directly with the children.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were 2 staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

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

- The staff supervised, encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- The children wore nappies and were changed with dignity and privacy by a staff member. Nappies were changed as necessary and in a timely manner. The staff use the correct language when changing the children's nappies.
- Children have plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practise and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- All the children had opportunities to move about freely and explore their environment, both indoors and outdoors.
- The service supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by
 - assigning a key person to each child,
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
 - being actively involved in children's play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining in when invited to by child,
 - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures, and body language,
 - using soft tones, the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact,

- providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
 - providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks,
 - working with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- On speaking with staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school including the child's likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times and via text messages, by phone calls, by email
 - Staff collated individualised educational plans (IEP) reflecting each child's developmental delays / persistent challenges in their self-care, independence, communication skills and in the management of the child's feelings.
 - Staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.
 - The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.
 - The inspector noted one each day of the inspection that the staff acknowledged a child's achievements 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.
 - The staff showed kindness were caring, supportive and reassuring whilst caring for the children.
 - The children engaged in free play, role play, creative play and constructive play.
 - The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children.
 - The staff encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours.
 - The children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'.
 - The children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict.
 - The environments supported each child's learning, development, and wellbeing.
 - The design, organisation and resourcing of the environment supported each child's wellbeing, learning and development, within the ethos and philosophy of the service.

- The environments provided a range of challenging, diverse, creative, and enriching experiences for all children in line with their stage of development.
- The atmosphere in the learning environments were encouraging and unhurried.
- The staff encouraged children to interact and to engage with a range of materials, activities, equipment in the indoor and outdoor environments, based on the child's needs, choices, interests, age and stage of development for examples: puzzles, tracks, and mark making materials.

Non-Compliance Information

There was insufficient sand provided in the large sand play area in the outdoor play area to encourage the children to play with the sand.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The person in charge submitted a written response to advise that the sand box was filled with sand and management will ensure it is to ensure there is sufficient sand in the sand box at all times to encourage the children to play with the sand.

Supporting documentation submitted

The person in charge submitted photographic evidence of the replenished sand in the sand play area.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 main entrance door was secure to prevent unauthorised entry.
- The external play area to the rear of the premises was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were wall mounted and secured to prevent any trip or strangulation hazard.

- The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperatures were maintained between 18°C to 22°C.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed washing their hands after toileting, outdoor play, messy play and after blowing their noses.
- The children washed their hands under supervision prior to consuming their snacks
- Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- The playrooms had cleaning products and foot operated lidded bins.
- The pre-school rooms and sanitary areas were well ventilated with the windows open throughout the inspection.
- Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break.
- Mouthed toys were removed after use and sterilised appropriately. The adults were observed regularly washing their hands including after disposing of tissues into bins.
- Fixtures, fittings and play resources were observed to be in a hygienic condition. The adults showed awareness of the services procedures including the management of suspected infection when questioned.
- A refrigerator was provided in preschool room 1 for the storage of perishable foods.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled and in designated storage containers.
- The nappy changing area had a leak-proof, sealable airtight container for the disposal of nappies.
- The nappy changing policy was displayed on the wall of the nappy changing area.
- There were cleaning schedules and records for the playrooms and sanitary areas.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.

Administration of Medication:

- It was advised by the staff presently no child is presently on medication.
- The staff demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to the safe storage and administration of medication should it be required.

Fire Safety:

- Records on file demonstrated that fire drills were carried out each month which helped to ensure that adults and children were familiar with the procedures in the event of an actual fire.

Outing:

- Not applicable as it was advised by the classroom manager that no outings are conducted from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Indoor Environment

1. The door on the play kitchen, and the tap on the play sink was loose and a wheel was missing from a shopping trolley, and a plastic storage basket was broken with a sharp edge exposed in preschool room one which could pose a potential safety concern.
2. The metal guard on the top of the two radiator covers in preschool room one were not secured and could pose risk of injury to a preschool child.
3. The lock on the refrigerator in preschool room one was broken and required replacement.
4. A dolls pushchair in preschool room two was broken and could pose a potential safety concern.
5. A cleaning agent was stored within child reach within the nappy changing handwashing area which could pose risk of injury to a preschool child.

Outdoor Area

6. The fire assembly point sign was not securely fixed to the fence in the outdoor area and could pose a potential risk of injury to a preschool child.
7. A plastic support bar on the children's climbing frame was loose and could pose risk of injury to a preschool child.

Infection Control:

8. The child sized seating and the floor mats in preschool room one and the child sized couches and the floor mats in the sensory room and preschool room two were ripped, stained and torn and could prove difficult to effectively clean. It is acknowledged that on the second day of the inspection the floor mats in preschool room two had been deep cleaned.
9. There were three soft toys in preschool room two which were heavily stained. It is acknowledged these were removed on the day of the inspection.
10. Children's spare clothes were stored on the radiator cabinet in the children's sanitary accommodation which could pose risk of cross contamination.
11. A large bag of natural crystal salt, and a wooden play kitchen unit was stored in the staff sanitary accommodation which could pose a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The person in charge submitted a written response to state

General Safety:

Indoor Environment

1. All broken or damaged toys were removed from the service and sent to recycling.
2. The radiator covers have been repaired.
3. Because of the nature of our service, children are allowed free access to their food and drinks in the refrigerator.
4. The pushchair was removed from the room and sent to recycling.
5. Staff received further training re: storing cleaning agents after they use them.

Outdoor Area

6. The fire assembly point sign has been secured to the fence.
7. The climbing frame has been repaired.

Infection Control:

8. The mats have been deep cleaned/removed and replacements have been ordered.
9. The stained soft toys have been removed.
10. Staff received further training re: leaving clothes (clean or otherwise) in the sanitary accommodation.
11. The natural crystal salt and the play kitchen have been removed from staff sanitary accommodation and the staff have been reminded not to leave equipment there.

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Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

The person in charge submitted photographic and documentary evidence of

1. The broken toys removed from the preschool room one.
2. The repaired radiator covers.
4. The pushchair removed from the preschool room two.
5. Risk assessments for indoor environment
6. The repaired fire assembly point sign and a risk assessment for the outdoor environment.
7. The support bar on the climbing frame has been secured.

Infection Control:

8. Proof of purchase of two couches and additional floor mats.
10. Evidence of training completed by staff on infection control
11. Evidence of the sand and play kitchen removed from the staff s sanitary accommodation.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff members had current training in first aid for children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes were inappropriately stocked with many items to include the large and medium wound dressings, the burns dressing, the eye pads and the triangular bandages out of date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The person in charge submitted a written response to advise that the first aid boxes have been stocked with the recommended contents and a staff member has been given the job to check the first aid box regularly and ensure it is properly stocked and all contents are in date.

Supporting documentation submitted

The person in charge submitted photographic evidence of the replaced items in the first aid box.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 firefighting 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was on 28/04/2025.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service December 2024.
- The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 9/04/2025.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire 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 service's insurance was for a part time service catering for a maximum number of 20 children, with an expiry date for the 27th of March 2026 and included the following
- public liability
 - insurance against fire and theft.
 - buildings insurance.
 - outings undertaken as part of the service provision.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(a) From a visual inspection the premises were of sound and stable structure.

The service's exterior walls, roof and foundation appeared to be structurally sound, weather/water-tight, to ensure protection from weather.

(b) Exits were clearly identified and visible during service hours.

Electrical sockets were safe.

On the day of inspection, the playroom temperatures were 18.7°C to 19. °C.

The service had an oil heating system with radiators thermostatically controlled.

(c) There was natural lighting from the windows on the outer walls in the playroom.

The playroom was well ventilated by means of the openable windows and doors.

The artificial lighting provided was shatter proof.

(d) The service had a cleaning schedule.

(e) There were three toilets and three wash hand basins for children's use.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) There was evidence of chipped paint and staining on the walls in preschool room one and the nappy changing area.

The foot operated bins in the preschool rooms were not maintained in a clean, hygienic condition with evidence of staining and the flip top bin in the hand washing area off the nappy changing area was broken.

The mechanical ceiling vents in the staff sanitary area and the hand washing area off the nappy changing area had evidence of dust and debris.

The wooden flooring in the storage shed in the outdoor area was rotten and uneven in sections and required replacement.

A space between the wooden shed and the main premises required cleaning as there was evidence of dead leaves and paper strewn in this space.

There was evidence of disposal paper hand towel on the window frames in preschool room one and it was advised that this was in place to exclude draughts.

(e) Inadequate sanitary facilities were provided for the staff with a child sized toilet provided for adult use.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The person in charge submitted a written response to advise

(d) The walls have been repainted in the preschool rooms.

The foot operated bins have been replaced.

The ceiling vents have been cleaned.

The wooden flooring in the shed has been replaced.

and the space between the shed and wall has been cleaned out.

All windows have been checked and tightened to ensure there are no drafts.

(e) The landlord has been contacted and requested to provide a hand washing sink in the nappy changing area so as to enable the staff to use that adult size toilet which had been adapted as a nappy changing facility since the previous inspection of the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

The person in charge submitted photographic evidence of

The repainted walls on the preschool rooms and the nappy changing area.

The cleaned ceiling vents.

The wooden floor replaced in the shed in the outdoor area.

The space between the shed and the wall cleared out.

A screenshot of the message sent to the landlord requesting a sink to be put into the nappy changing area to enable the staff to use the adult sanitary facilities on the premises.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 29 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.