

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN038
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Name of Service:	Millmount Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Sli an Coiste, Old Tuam Road, Athlone, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	N37 C2F7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deborah Downes
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	19/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	38
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Address of the Early Years 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 full day care service is in a housing development in Athlone, Co. Roscommon. The service operates a full day care service from 8.00hrs to 17.30hrs. An Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and sessional care pre-school programmes are also offered. The service caters for children aged between 0 to 6 years. The service is registered for a maximum number of 70 pre-school children, at any one time. The service provides an after-school programme for school aged children. There are five play areas, the Baby/ Wobbler room and the Toddler room are on the ground floor, and the Senior Preschool /Junior Preschool room and School aged room, are on the first floor. There is a designated kitchen where the main meals are prepared, cooked, and stored on site. Quiet rest areas are available for children to opt out of an activity if he/ she wishes to do so. There are two sleep rooms (four cots in the sleep room adjacent to the Baby / Wobbler room and two cots in the sleep area adjacent to the Toddler room), available for younger children requiring sleep provision. Additionally, there are six stackable beds for older children's sleep provision. There are outdoor play areas to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is supernumerary, and not on the premises daily. The registered provider is the business manager / administrator. There is the person in charge and there is a named deputy person in charge. There are thirteen staff working in the premises. Twelve staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education. Additionally, there is a designated chef who prepares, and cooks the service meals.

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 Regulations 9,11,19,23,25,26, and 28. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived, and the registered provider was on site from 10.30hrs and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.

(2) Through discussion with the designated person in charge, it was advised that six new staff were employed since the most recent focused inspection of the 13th of April 2023.

(a) &(b) 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 all staff members The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Three of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age and had the required police vetting on file.

(4) The twelve staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 7 in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(1) Documentary evidence indicated that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children. At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider and person in charge ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 39 children present -

- 12 children were aged between 1 to 2 years,
- 10 children were aged between 2 to 3 years,
- 17 children were aged between 3 to 5 years.

On the afternoon of the inspection there were 38 children present

- 12 children were aged between 1 to 2 years,
- 9 children were aged between 2 to 3 years,
- 17 children were aged between 3 to 5 years.

There were eight staff directly caring for these children. Additionally, the person in charge and two relief persons acted as childcare relief.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were always two staff on the premises while the service 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, and

Compliance Information

- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
- For children attending on a full day care service, all meals and snacks were supplied by the service. Parent also had the option of supplying an individual child's food preferences.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The staff complied with the service's healthy eating policy.

- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children’s ages and stages of development.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting.
- The children from the Baby / Wobbler and Toddler rooms, who wore nappies were changed in a sensitive and timely manner, on a regular basis.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax in a designated cosy area in each of the playrooms. Additionally, there were two designated sleep rooms with six cots for younger children’s sleep provision.
- Children have plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging. The children could move about freely and explore their environment. The children were observed at free play, hammering, playing with puzzles, games, insets, playing house, kitchen, stacking, at construction, shape sorting, connecting, and playing with animals, dinosaurs. The children were observed at messy play, running, using the slide, and climbing on shapes. The children chatted about colours they liked. The staff read stories and children questioned the characters and gave their views. The staff used visual aids and probed with questions such as ‘who is this?’, ‘how many are there?’, and ‘where is that?’ The staff acknowledged a child’s achievements, and the children were observed having fun.
- In the outdoor area, the children played on rockers, at digging, on the slides, playing in the outdoor mud kitchens, riding on tractors/ bicycles, chasing, running, and playing catch.
- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by -
 - having a key person system for each child,
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
 - 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.

- Parents/guardians signed a parental agreement form and received a parent handbook with the service ethos, daily routines, strategies for supporting the children and the updated policies, procedures, response plans.
- On speaking with the 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, preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times and via text messages, by phone calls, instant messaging application and by email.
- The younger children had individual my child record communication books advising of the child's likes, interests, needs and preferences. The records also included food and sleep provision, nappy changes, and any individual childcare needs. These records were given to parents and guardians daily.
- The service used a childcare application which allowed the staff to interactively communicate with parents and guardians on their child's care needs and learning experiences. The childcare application captured a child's attendance record, daily care needs such as food, medication, nappy changing and sleep provision. Learning and picture stories were collated showing the individual child's likes, interests, and preferences. There were also photographs of children engaging in activities and their art and craftwork.
- The 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 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.
- On the day of the inspection the staff showed kindness. They were thoughtful, supportive, and reassuring whilst caring for the children. They cared for children by being supportive while the children engaged in free play, role play, and creative play. A climate was fostered where the children knew their boundaries. The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Older children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

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 external doors were appropriately secured to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access and unauthorised persons gaining access to the premises.
- The external outdoor play areas were secured by fencing and gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area or children could not exit unsupervised.
- The door into the kitchen, staff toilets, office, and staff room had a system of security.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- There were intact safety straps as per manufacturer's instructions, on the highchairs in the Baby /Wobbler and Toddler rooms.
- There were high windows and or restrictive access devices on the low-level windows in the playrooms, as a safety security precaution.
- There was frosting on glass of the double doors and on the nappy changing viewing panels to ensure safety and a child's dignity.
- Blinds had fastener devices as a safety measure preventing any potential hazard access.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were wall mounted to prevent any trip or strangulation hazard.
- The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperature was maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- The water was thermostatically controlled with a temperature reading of 32°C, on the day of inspection.
- Cleaning products were stored out of child reach within each of the playrooms.

Infection Control:

- Staff prompted and supervised the children to wash their hands before eating and following nappy changing / toileting, messy play, and outdoor play.
- Adequate liquid soap and paper towels were available at the wash hand basins in the sanitary areas and the playroom wash hand basins.
- There were two designated nappy changing areas. The nappy mats were intact. The children's barrier creams were individually labelled.
- Staff involved in the serving of food, wore disposal aprons when nappy changing.

- The toys and play equipment were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- A cleaning and disinfection schedule was available in the service. There were suitable cleaning products available in the service. The inspector noted high contact areas, were cleaned regularly, as per best practice guidance. The outdoor play equipment was cleaned prior to/ after a child's use, with documented records maintained. Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in each of the playrooms.
- There were foot operated lidded bins in the sanitary areas and playrooms.

Administration of Medication:

- The staff showed awareness of the correct procedures for the administration and storage of medication. No child was required to have medication given to them during the inspection

Safe Sleep:

- There were two designated sleep rooms with four cots and two cots for younger children's sleep provision. Six stackable beds were available for older children requiring sleep if required. On the day of inspection, children were observed sleeping on demand.
- The sleep policy detailed the correct temperature, lighting, ventilation, space between cots and child safety requirements.
- The inspector observed and documentary evidence indicated that the staff physically checked sleeping children every 10 minutes. The service kept documented sleep records. Records for sleeping children included a record of the room temperature and the position, colour and breathing of the child and the signature of the staff member who checks the sleeping child.
- A pod thermometer was available in the sleep rooms and used as the method of recording the sleep room temperature and therefore taking remedial action when temperatures were above 20 °C and below 16 °C.
- A supply of clean linen was available for each child.
- Cellular blankets that allow air to circulate were used for sleeping children under 2 years of age.

Fire Safety:

- Records on file demonstrated that fire drills were carried out frequently which helped to ensure that adults and children were familiar with the procedure in the event of an actual fire.
- The emergency exit routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was a rodent bait box on the footpath of the outdoor area. potentially accessible to children.
2. A press under the handwashing sink in the preschool room on the first floor was not secured and could pose a potential safety concern as there was a bait box in this press also. It is acknowledged that the staff immediately secured this press when the inspector advised of same.
3. There were sections of the wicker fencing missing and not secured which could pose a potential safety concern.
4. A wooden work bench was cracked in the preschool room on the first floor which could pose a potential safety concern.

Infection Control:

5. The bins provided for the disposal of nappies were not foot operated in the two nappy changing areas.
6. A flip top bin was provided for the disposal of hand towels in one of the nappy changing areas off the toddler room which could pose a risk of cross contamination.
7. In the baby/wobbler room and the playschool room, there were floor mats with evidence of being frayed and torn thereby preventing effective cleaning.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted a written response to the office of the early years inspectorate to advise

General Safety

1. The bait boxes have been removed and the pest control company have been contacted to ensure pest control measures have been placed out of child's reach and are all tamper proof boxes.
2. The press under the sink has been secured and keys stored out of child's reach and A safety note has been placed on all sink unit doors to ensure staff are always reminded to lock the door and remove the keys immediately.
3. The unsecured wicker fencing has been removed. To ensure there is no safety concern. all the wicker fencing that was loose has been completely removed
4. The bench was removed immediately and disposed of. Staff were informed to remove any play items if they are in any way faulty which could pose as a potential safety concern

Infection Control

5. The nappy changing bins have been replaced with peddle operated ones.
6. The flip top bin in the toddler rooms changing area has been removed and replaced with a peddle operated bin
7. Both mats have been mended with the same washable leather material as the rest of the mats, to ensure they are easy to wipe clean daily. Regular check's will be done on all matting to ensure they can be effectively cleaned.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted to advise of

General Safety:

1. The removed bait boxes in the outdoor area
2. A new lock fitted on the press, the key stored out of child reach and signage on the press door to remind staff to ensure press is securely locked.
3. The removed wicker fencing on the walls of the outdoor area.
4. The removed work bench from the preschool room on the first floor.

Infection Control:

5. New bins in both nappy changing area's replaced with foot peddle bins.
6. Flip top bin replaced with a foot peddle bin.
7. Mats in the wobbler and playschool room repaired.

Summary Comment

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

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. Six staff members had current training in first aid for children.

(2)(a) On each floor, there was a wall mounted cabinet with first aid content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position.

(b) The service demonstrated that the first aid cabinets were fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 11th of November 2025.

(b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 21st of March 2025. The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 26th of September 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 with an expiry date 27th of March 2026, was for a full day care covering 70 children and included the following –

- public liability insurance,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- buildings insurance,
- insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision.