

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO005		
Name of Service:	Busy Bees Day Care & Family Centre Ltd		
Address of Service:	Rathmadder, Gurteen, Co. Sligo		
Eircode:	F56 N120		
Name of Registered Provider:	Ruth Conlon		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	12/08/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM 19
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen		
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		

Description of service

Busy Bees Day care and family centre is a not for profit, full day care service located in a rural town in County Sligo. It provides a preschool service for children aged between 0 and 6 years of age and is open from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm. A school age service is also provided.

Staffing

There were 16 adults employed to work in the service, including the Person in Charge and the Deputy Person in Charge. On the day of the inspection, 11 staff members were present. Of these, seven were working directly with the pre-school children, and two were assigned to the after-school group. Both the Person in Charge and the Deputy person in charge were available to provide cover for staff breaks as required. The Registered Provider does not work in the service daily.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,19,23,22,24 and 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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

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

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

Additional Information

1. A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of the child was issued to the registered provider on 12th August 2025.
2. A written response was submitted by the registered provider on 13th August 2025 outlining the measures taken to address the immediate concern, see body of report for more detail.

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.

(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)

The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place within the service, outlining the lines of authority and accountability, as well as the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee. Each room had a named Room Leader, contributing to effective oversight and coordination across the setting

(2)

On the day of the inspection, eleven adults were present in the service. Seven adults employed to work directly with the pre-school children.

The following vetting information was available for sixteen adults:

(a) Twenty-seven written validated references from past employers for sixteen of the adults.

(b) Five written validated references from reputable sources for five of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all sixteen staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the early years inspectorate regulatory notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4)

Fourteen of the adult staff members whose roles required qualifications provided evidence of holding a major award at Level 5 or higher in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications, or held qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirements.

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

- The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were always working directly with the children. On the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service there were seven staff providing direct care to 25 children. An additional adult (the person in charge) was providing relief cover for staff breaks.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.

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

Physical and material environment.

- The service comprised of four uniquely themed care rooms—arctic, desert, rainforest, and ocean—each designed to reflect its name and foster a stimulating learning environment. The arctic Room, designated as the baby room, features vibrant wall decorations with motifs of Arctic animals such as penguins and polar bears. The interest areas are thoughtfully arranged to support the developmental needs of infants, encouraging sensory exploration and early learning in a nurturing setting
- The arctic, desert, rainforest rooms include open shelving with a variety of age-appropriate toys, each box labelled with a picture of its contents to support children's independence and decision-making. There are soft play areas with mats, a fidget wall to promote sensory regulation, and a kitchen area that encourages imaginative play and social interaction.
- The service includes a large outdoor area with an all-weather surface, allowing children to engage in outdoor play daily. The space is equipped with bikes, trikes, and toy cars, supporting physical activity and movement. A designated sensory area features a sandpit, chalkboard, and basketball net, offering varied opportunities for exploration and gross motor development. There is also a roofed outdoor area that provides shade and shelter. During recent hot weather, children spent a significant portion of their sessions outside. The area also includes a small picnic table and bench, encouraging social interaction and rest during play.
- All the play and educational resources were accessible to the children at their height, with appropriately sized tables and chairs or nearby locations within interest areas to provide children with a choice of tabletop activities or floor play.

Basic needs:

- On the day of inspection, adequate food and drink were available and provided by the service. Mealtimes were not rushed, and children were encouraged to be independent where appropriate.

- Children accessed the toilet in accordance with their individual needs, supported by child-friendly handwashing posters displayed in the toilets to promote correct hygiene practices. Staff were observed supervising handwashing to ensure it was carried out effectively.
- Tissues were available for personal care needs such as runny noses, and spare clothes were provided by parents. Protective plastic aprons were used during messy play activities to support hygiene and personal care.
- Staff responded to children in a timely and appropriate manner; for example, when children were disagreeing over a toy, staff intervened appropriately to support resolution and positive social interaction.
- The daily routine facilitated free movement, with short periods of adult-initiated activities interspersed with child-led free play, allowing children to choose their own activities and move between interest areas. Children were encouraged to be independent in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development, including self-feeding, toileting, dressing for home, and tidying up after activities.
- Children's need for rest was accommodated through designated sleep rooms, and for those who did not sleep, quiet corners were available during free play.
- Staff used positive methods to guide and correct behaviour, and children were supported in learning to negotiate and resolve minor conflicts independently.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Consistent staffing ensured that children were familiar with the adults caring for them, fostering a sense of security and trust. Staff were attentive and caring in their approach, engaging with children at their level and maintaining ongoing conversations throughout the session. Children were actively listened to, praised, and encouraged, with meaningful interactions offered during various activities.
- Strong teamwork was observed, with staff collaborating effectively and sharing responsibilities. A sense of belonging was promoted through individually named spaces for personal belongings and displays of children's artwork and family photos.
- Children were supported in developing positive peer relationships, with encouragement to be helpful, take turns, and share resources. Staff ensured regular opportunities for parents to engage with them, including after preschool hours if needed.
- Language and communication development were supported through positive interactions, storytelling, music, and nursery rhymes, with changing curriculum themes helping to expand vocabulary. Children were regularly praised and encouraged, helping to build their confidence and willingness to express ideas and ask questions.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22-Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- All meals and snacks were provided by the service. Weekly menus were available for review on the day of inspection. At 10:52am, pre-school children were observed eating breakfast items including porridge, cornflakes, Weetabix, rice crispies, and toast. The main meal was served at 11:54am, consisting of pasta bake with vegetable sauce and bacon. Snacks such as yogurt and crackers were offered throughout the day, and at 2:39pm, children were observed eating waffles and beans.
- Drinking water was freely available and provided with meals. On the day of inspection, an adequate amount of food was available to each child, and meals were observed to be nutritious and varied.

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 to the service was secure upon the inspector's unannounced arrival, preventing unauthorized access and unsupervised exits.
- The perimeter of the service was secured with high-level wire fencing and walls.
- Materials and resources were visually clean and in good repair.
- Foot-operated pedal bins were available throughout the premises for safe waste disposal.
- A child-safe gate was in place to prevent access to the kitchen.
- Cleaning products were stored out of children's reach.
- All electrical leads, flexes, and blind cords inside the service were securely fastened.
- Adequate handwashing facilities were provided, including warm water, liquid soap, and paper towels.
- Soap was readily available for children to wash hands before eating and after toileting or nappy changes.
- Child-friendly handwashing posters were displayed near sinks.

- Handwashing was supervised by staff to ensure effectiveness.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables and highchairs were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in all care rooms and dining room.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels. Older children were observed to wash their hands with support, before snacks.
- Aprons and gloves were available for staff when changing of a child was required.
- Soap was readily available to children to wash their hands prior to eating, after both toileting and nappy changes.
- The internal door to laundry room was secure with high reach handles so that the children could not access the room unsupervised.
- Storage facilities were inaccessible on high shelves or away from children.

Administration of Medication:

- There was no medication administered on the day of inspection. When interviewed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The wall-mounted sensory board in the outdoor area was observed to include metal components that exhibited rust. Additionally, several items on the board had potentially sharp edges and points that could result in injury to a child.
2. In the outdoor area, a wire was observed to be accessible to preschool children, having come away from the wall.

3. In the outdoor area, a rodent bait box was observed to be accessible to preschool children. Although the box was located in an area with a gate that could be locked, the lock was not in place at the time of inspection.
4. The wooden gate in the outdoor area had missing slats, allowing children potential access to the oil tank. The wood was severely eroded, resulting in sharp edges and exposed rusty nails within reach of children, posing a significant safety hazard.

Infection Control:

5. During several observed nappy changes, staff were seen accessing the bins using their hands, as the foot-operated bins were not functioning. Additionally, children's hands were not routinely washed after nappy changes, and staff did not consistently change their aprons before beginning a new nappy change. These practices increase the potential for cross-contamination

Safe Sleep:

6. On the day of the inspection, the temperature in the sleep rooms exceeded the recommended range of 18–22°C, with a recorded ambient temperature of 24.2°C at 13:29 hours while four children aged 1–2 years were sleeping. Although fans and open windows were in use in an attempt to reduce the temperature, an Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider. It is acknowledged that the provider responded promptly with actions taken to mitigate the risk.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The wall-mounted sensory board previously located in the outdoor area has been fully removed. Should a replacement sensory board be installed in the future, it will be monitored closely and removed promptly at the first sign of rust or deterioration. This measure has been formally noted in the outdoor area risk assessment.
2. The external wire has been re-secured using tape and adhesive to prevent any potential tripping or safety hazards. Staff have been informed of this adjustment, and it has been added to the outdoor area checklist to ensure ongoing monitoring. A note has also been included in the outdoor risk assessment, advising staff to check the wire's positioning prior to outdoor activities to ensure it remains securely fixed to the wall.
3. The lock on the gate leading to the area containing the rodent bait box has been reinstated and is now kept locked at all times when children are present outdoors. All staff have been reminded of the importance of ensuring the keypad lock is secure during outdoor play. This procedure has been added to the outdoor risk assessment, with a designated staff member responsible for checking that the gate is locked prior to children

accessing the outdoor area.

4. Chicken wire has been temporarily installed to cover the area of missing slates on the fence while awaiting full replacement, which is scheduled to take place following the installation of new outdoor equipment in the coming weeks. The section of fencing with rusted nails has been removed to eliminate potential hazards. A daily risk assessment of both indoor and outdoor equipment has been implemented, with any damaged items to be removed immediately. Staff have been reminded to replace broken slates promptly in future, and this has been added to the outdoor risk assessment. Additionally, staff are now required to position themselves near the fence during outdoor play to ensure ongoing supervision and safety.

Infection Control:

5. The nappy changing policy has been updated to reinforce best hygiene practices. Key changes include the requirement for staff to change aprons between each nappy change and to assist children with handwashing immediately afterwards. All staff have read and signed the updated policy to confirm their understanding and compliance. These procedures are now embedded in daily routines to ensure consistent implementation and to uphold high standards of care and infection control

Safe Sleep:

6. Following the inspection, an action plan was implemented to address temperature concerns in the sleep room. As part of this plan, new fans were purchased and installed. Since these measures were introduced, the temperature in the sleep room has noticeably decreased, creating a more comfortable environment for children. During periods of hot weather, staff are instructed to close the blinds first thing in the morning to prevent direct sunlight from heating the room, and to switch on fans early in the day. These procedures are clearly outlined in the action plan and have been communicated to all staff

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence has been attached, including the completed risk assessment
2. Photographic evidence sent in of wire in outside area secure.
3. Photographic evidence has been submitted showing the completed risk assessment and the lock installed on the gate.
4. Proof of the email booking to have the fence replaced has been submitted, along with a photograph showing that the area has been secured

Infection Control:

- The updated nappy changing policy has been submitted.

Safe Sleep:

- The action plan has been submitted via email, and photographic evidence of the new fans has also been provided.

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Non-Compliance Information

- Although a record of children in attendance was maintained, it was not consistently updated in real time. Children who moved from the arctic room to the desert room during sleep hours were not signed in or out of either room. Additionally, one child who was present in the service on the day of inspection had not been signed into the attendance record.
- On the day of the inspection, the inspector was not asked to sign into the premises, and there was no visitor sign-in book available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- A new system for signing children in and out of rooms during sleep transitions has been developed collaboratively by the staff team. This system is working effectively and has been implemented across all rooms, with individual sheets stored alongside each room's register. Staff have been trained on the new

procedure and reminded of the importance of accurately recording transitions, including marking children as absent or sick where applicable.

2. Additionally, a new Visitors Book has been introduced and placed in the hallway. It includes all relevant headings and must be signed by the staff member who permits entry. The book is clearly visible and accessible to all staff to ensure consistent use and accountability.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence has been submitted, including the sleep transition sign-in/sign-out sheet and a picture of the new visitor's book.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 24 has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Written documentation was available to confirm that adequate insurance was in place to cover full day care for 67 children, valid from 28/03/2025 to 27/03/2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

1. A significant amount of black mould was observed in the desert Room bathroom. Although mechanical ventilation was present, the walls were visibly damp with wet stains, and black mould spots were evident on the floor. This indicates inadequate ventilation and moisture control, posing a health and hygiene risk to children and staff.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Mould spray has been used to treat and clean areas of mould in both bathrooms, followed by repainting to restore hygiene and appearance. A daily mould check has now been added to each room's risk assessment to ensure early detection and prompt action. Additionally, a specialist ("Mould Master") has been booked to assess the affected areas and inspect the ventilation systems. Plans are in place to repaint the bathrooms following this assessment to further support long-term prevention.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence has been sent in to confirm the removal of mould and that the room has been painted.

Summary Comment

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