

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO013
Name of Service:	First Friends Playgroup
Address of Service:	Geevagh Community Childcare, Geevagh, Co. Sligo
Eircode:	F52 Y338
Name of Registered Provider:	Elaine McTiernan
Service type:	Full Day
Date of Inspection:	10/11/2025
No of pre-school children:	AM 22 PM 8
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	Non Applicable
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Description of service

First Friends is a community run full day care service located on the grounds of geevagh Community Centre. The registered provider operates the service from geevagh health centre. The service is registered and to cater for a maximum of 33 preschool children aged 2 years and 8 months to 6 years. The service operates 08:30 to 15:00 Monday and Friday and 8:30 to 17:30 Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The service operates outdoors with access to five care rooms in the main building.

Staffing

On the day of inspection five adults were employed in the service. The registered provider is a member of the voluntary committee board and does not directly work with the preschool 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. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,20,22,23,25,26 and 27. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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.

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 the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.
- 2) The service has a total of five adult employees. During the inspection, three of these adults were present: the person in charge and two staff members employed to work directly with the children. The other two employees one after-school worker and one office-based staff member were not present on the day of inspection. The following vetting information was available for 5 adults:
- (a) Five written validated references from past employers for four of the adults.
 - (b) Five written validated references from reputable sources for four of the adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five 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 two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.
- (4) Four of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children. There was three adults working with 22 children on the morning of the unannounced inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.
- (8) The registered provider ensured that the requirement for at least two adults to be present on the premises at all times when children were in attendance was fully met.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) *Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) *having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) *there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Operating primarily as an outdoor service, the service utilizes two all-weather areas with necessary equipment for play and various outdoor activities. There are two sheltered zones one of these sheltered zones is positioned directly outside the preschool room, with double doors facilitating movement between environments. On the day of the inspection. children actively participated in sensory and physical play through sand and water pits, a slide, a large tent, and a range of equipment including tractors, a seesaw, and a child’s kitchen with accessories and balance bikes.
 - (b) The indoor environment is organized with low-lying shelves to ensure materials are easily accessible to children. Internal resources include a dedicated rest area situated beside the library, as well as a variety of board games, jigsaws, and building blocks to support cognitive and quiet play. On the day of inspection sleeping was not observed, the service had adequate floor beds available to the children if the children required them.

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

- Parents supply morning snacks each day and main meal is provided by the service. All food arrives to the service in the morning in the children’s lunch bag, perishable food is ready to be stored in the fridge The menu is displayed for parents and staff also communicate the menu on a daily basis through a messaging app. On the day of inspection at 10.55 children were observed eating ham rolls, jam sandwiches, yougets, cheese,apples,grapes and oranges. At 13.20 the main meal was served and consisted of wraps, fish fingers, chicken, sweet corn and beans. Water melon was also available for the children.
- There was an adequate amount of food was available to each child. Meals were observed to be nutritious and varied throughout the day. Water was available to children with their meals. Bottles for the younger children were labelled and stored within fridges. Should a child refuse a meal, an alternative is provided.

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 into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, preventing unauthorised access and preventing children from exiting the building unsupervised.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Blind cords in the rooms inspected were secured and not accessible to the children.
- Child gate was present at the top of the stairwell to prevent children from accessing the kitchen and the staircase unsupervised.
- The windows were secure which reduced the risk of a child exiting or falling.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall wooden fencing and a bolted gate.

Infection Control:

- The premises appeared clean and well maintained. Sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped. Children were observed to wash their hands after outdoor play, before eating and after toileting.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in the indoor and outdoor eating areas.
- Waste was managed appropriately with pedal operated, lidded bins.
- The person in charge maintained a daily and weekly cleaning schedule to ensure that regular cleaning of the service took place.
- Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and paper towels were available at the wash hand basin used by the children.

Administration of Medication:

- When discussed with staff, they were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were kept clear for safe evacuation if needed.
- Records showed that fire drills are undertaken monthly.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Cleaning products in the upstairs bathroom were not stored in a secure, locked location. These substances were readily accessible to preschool children, posing a significant risk of accidental ingestion or chemical injuries. It is noted that the press did have a lock on it but was not in use at the time of inspection.
2. A loose piece of timber with an exposed nail was identified within the upstairs bathroom. As this area is accessed by preschool children, the exposed sharp hardware presents an immediate risk of physical injury or puncture wounds.

Infection Control:

3. The backsplash in the upstairs bathroom was missing, leaving the underlying wall material exposed. This creates an infection control risk, as the area cannot be maintained in a hygienic condition.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. Press is now locked and keys are stored in a safe place. Manager has reinforced with all staff importance of keeping the press locked and keys in a secure location.
2. Damage had been caused by workmen looking to find water stopcock - timber repaired all contractors carrying out work will be informed of importance of good health & safety practices.

Infection Control:

3. The Wall plastered and painted with waterproof/cleanable plaster and paint. Maintain observation of wall condition.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of locked press.
2. Photographic evidence of damaged timber fixed.

Infection Control:

3. Photographic evidence of wall plastered and new covering.

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 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) Evidence was available to demonstrate that one adult held current first aid responder (FAR) certification, and this adult was rostered to work at the service during the hours of operation.
- (2) (a) There was sufficient first aid equipment supplied in the service which was stored out of reach of the children.
- (b) The first aid supplies were accessible at all times should they be required.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(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 procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 05th November 2025.
 - (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment

was dated march 2025. The records for the smoke detection system indicated the last service occurred in 27th August 2025

- (2) The record referred to in paragraph(1) was available and open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (4) On the day of inspection a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were observed to be displayed in a conspicuous place within the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

- On the day of inspection, effective supervision and staff engagement were consistently demonstrated across all areas. The staff were observed positioning themselves within sight and sound range of children, allowing for good supervision. The staff were observed to supervise the children when eating their meals.
- The outdoor area was designed to ensure that the children can be kept within sight and sound of the staff. Regular headcounts were performed during movements between the indoor and outdoor spaces, and when children were using the bathroom.