

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO031
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Name of Service:	Little Bunnies
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Address of Service:	Ballinalack Community Park, Bunninadden, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F56 P036
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Name of Registered Provider:	Edel Flannery
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	8	PM	N/A
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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).

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Description of service

This community based sessional service is located in a rural area in County Sligo. The service caters for children aged from two years and six months to six years of age between 09:00-12:00 hours. The premises is located in a section of the first floor of a local sports club centre. One large room used as the care room. The service has a dedicated office space and store area for their sole use and sanitary accommodation. Access to an outdoor area off the premises is available on a daily basis. This outdoor area is a community sports facility with a playground and sports field.

Staffing

The person in charge operates the service single-handedly working directly with the children with a person available to provide support in the event of an emergency.

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 9,11,15,23,26 and 27. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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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.

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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) 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-
- c) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- d) 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
- e) 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge in the single handedly operated service with a named person available to deputise in the event of an emergency.
- b) The designated person was available in the service during the inspection. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that the designated person was on the premises when the service was in operation.

(2) The following vetting information was available for four adults.

- a) Two written validated references from past employers for one of the adults.

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b) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) The adult who worked directly with the children in the service held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Three of the emergency contacts did not have references on file for review as required.

(d) Three of the emergency contacts that are available to the service in case of an emergency did not have a Curriculum Vitae on file, due to this the requirement for international police vetting could not be established.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) (d)

The service now has one dedicated emergency person. Any emergency cover now needs 2 references and employment history on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

2 References for one Emergency contacts.

Employment history submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (a) (d) has been adequately addressed.

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.*

(3) *Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

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(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) On the morning of the unannounced inspection, there was 1 staff member caring for 11 children in the service.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children of 1 adult for each 11 sessional children aged from 2 years and 6 months to six years was adhered to with 1 staff caring for the 11 children present.

(8)(c) On the day of the inspection one staff member cared for the children singlehandedly. An emergency person was available nearby to provide support if needed in the event of an emergency.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

1) *A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

(a) the name and date of birth of the child;

(b) the date on which the child first attended the service;

(c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;

(d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;

(e) authorisation for the collection of the child;

(f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;

(g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

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- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,
 - (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and
 - (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)

On the day of inspection, a sample of nine children's files were reviewed, a record in writing was held on file for the following.

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child was available from nine records.
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service was available from nine records reviewed.
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service was available from nine records.
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child was available for all nine records.
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention was available from nine records.
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was available from all nine records.
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child was available from nine records.
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency was available for all nine records.

- (3) On the day of inspection, a record in writing in respect of each pre-school child was available and open to inspection on the premises by-
- (c) an authorised person.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Physical and material environment:

- The care room in Little Bunnies is a large, bright room with defined interest areas designed to stimulate the imagination of the preschool children. The indoor area was laid out to facilitate sensory experiences through arts and crafts and with the sand tray. Fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, shape sorters, crayons, and paper to draw on. Gross motor development was supported with climbing equipment and an area to play ball outside.
- The rest area included a canopy with cushions and soft matting located beside the library, which allowed the children to select books and relax throughout the session
- The room also features specific sensory areas, including a water area and a sand box, providing children with essential opportunities for tactile exploration and messy play.
- The service places a particular emphasis on outdoor play; much of the session observed was based outdoors. Children were appropriately dressed in shorts and t-shirts due to the warm weather. The staff member spent time promoting independence in dressing and preparing for outdoor activities. Once outside, children had a variety of play equipment to choose from, including swings, slides, a climbing frame, a seesaw, and spinners. All outdoor areas and equipment were risk-assessed each morning to ensure the safety of all children.
- Transitions to and from the outdoor areas were observed to be well-supervised, with clear instructions from the staff member. The children appeared familiar with the routine of passing through a car park to access the playground; it was observed that all children used a child rein and a buddy system was in place.

Basic Needs:

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- Children's lunches were observed to be stored in the service fridge. A healthy eating policy is in place and supported by parents, who provide nutritious snacks such as fruit, yoghurts, and sandwiches. Water was available throughout the session and remained accessible to children.
- The children are toilet trained, with staff providing prompts and assistance to encourage independence. Effective hand hygiene practices were observed before and after outdoor play, prior to snacks, and following toilet use.
- The rest areas consisted of large floor cushions, overhanging canopies /tent was available in in the care room, children were observed using the area on the day of inspection.
- Tables and chairs in the care room were appropriate to the age and stage of development of pre-school children attending the room.

Supporting Relationships:

- The staff member was observed to be calm in their approach, speaking in a low voice and constantly encouraging the children as they tackled various tasks. The preschool children appeared happy and content in the company of their peers and the adult supporting them.
- There was evidence of familiarity between the staff and children as conversations were had about important events in children's life's, including holidays, and new animals being born on the farm.
- The service took measures to support the children's relationships including keeping parents and guardians fully informed of the daily activities. This was completed at drop off and collection.
- Children were observed being allowed to self-direct their own play. The children were afforded the opportunity to choose activities daily and to follow through on their choices and change activities if they so wished.
- Both the outdoor and indoor play environment facilitated the children to play in small and large groups. Children were observed taking turns and playing alongside each other in collaboration.

Part VI - Safety

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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 secured by a locked door with high reach handle that the children could not access. Staff were vigilant when opening and closing the door to prevent a child from exiting the premises unsupervised. Visitor access was controlled by the main door being kept locked and could only be opened from the inside.
- The outside area was secured by perimeter walls and gates. Gate at the exit from play area had secure locks in place so children could not leave unknow to the staff.
- The Cleaning products in the service were securely stored and out of child reach.
- Toys and play equipment and materials were developmentally appropriate, kept in good repair and did not pose an injury risk to children.
- Thermostatically controlled hot water was available for use by the children to facilitate safe and hygienic hand washing.
- Window restrictors were in place where children could access the windows.
- Waste disposal facilities were inaccessible to the preschool children.
- There were no trailing flexes in the service.
- The service had a risk assessment in place for outdoor play and children crossing the car park to reach the playground.
- The kitchen was unacceptable to the children by a locked door with high reach handle.
- Handrails were provided on the staircase to ensure the safety of those using them.

Infection Control:

- The inspector observed that the children washed their hands regularly throughout the inspection to include, prior to consuming snack, after outdoor play and after toileting.
- Suitable hand-washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- The sanitary accommodations had foot operated lidded bins.
- The pre-school room was well ventilated with the windows open at times throughout the inspection.

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- Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break. Children were seen being encouraged to clean up after snack.
- Cleaning schedules were in place and maintained, staff were observed cleaning the care room after the children had finished snack.
- Daily outdoor risk assessments were carried out, and documentary evidence was available for inspection.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered on the day of inspection; written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were observed to be unobstructed, ensuring safe and immediate exit or access in the event of an emergency.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (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 22/04/2026.
 - (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

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was dated May 2025. The records for the smoke detection system indicated the last service occurred in 17/04/2026.

- (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

Adequate supervision by sight and sound was maintained throughout the inspection. The staff member was effectively positioned across indoor and outdoor environments to ensure children remained within view, with increased vigilance noted during higher-risk activities such as outdoor play. Active oversight was observed during lunch and transitions, with the environment arranged to minimize blind spots. During toileting, supervision was maintained through verbal check-ins and assistance given if needed.