

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

/TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO032
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Name of Service:	Little Darlings Creche/ Playschool
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Address of Service:	31 Ashbury Lawn, Ballinode, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 EY62
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Name of Registered Provider:	Christine O'Carroll
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	13/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	14
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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:	L. Costello
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

Little Darlings is a privately owned full day care early years' service, on the outskirts of Sligo Town. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 23 preschool children (maximum of 16 in full day care) , as per the national register, ranging from 0 to 6 years of age. The service operates 5 days per week for 51 weeks of the year. School aged children are also catered for in the service.

Staffing

The registered provider is the person in charge and is involved in the daily operation of the service. There are four other adults working in the service.

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 and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16 (h) (i) (j) (k), 19, 23, 24, 25 and 28. 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 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
- (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) (a) (b)

There was a person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(c)

There is a clear management structure within the service including childcare workers, deputy person in charge and person in charge.

(2) (a) (b)

Five adults working in the service files were reviewed. Nine validated references from previous past employers and one validated reference from another source were available in respect of all five adults.

(c)

Garda vetting had been obtained for all five adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as none of the five adults had lived outside the state for six consecutive months or more.

(4)

Five adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) 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)

There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children. Five adults worked directly with 17 children on the morning of the inspection.

(2)

The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

- Babies/Toddler Room: Three adults cared for Seven children aged from one to three years of age.
- Preschool 1: One adult cared for four children aged three to four years of age.
- Preschool 2: One adult cared for Six children aged from three to five years of age.

At 14:00 in the afternoon, the following ratios were observed:

- Babies/Toddler Room: Three adults cared for Five children aged from one to three years of age.
- Preschool 1: One adult cared for four children aged three to four years of age.
- Preschool 2: One adult cared for five children aged from three to five years of age.

(8)(a)

On a review of attendance records a minimum of two adults were on the premises during operating hours.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (b) a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) (h)

The registered provider demonstrated adequate records of daily attendance of the preschool children.

(1) (i)

Details of a daily staff roster was available on the day of inspection.

(1) (j)

Medication records to include the name and date of birth of the child, medication administered, and consent were made available for review.

(1) (k)

Accident and incident records were available for review. The last documented accident was in august 2023 and had all the required information including risk assessment completed and confirmation of parents being informed of the accident.

(2) (b)

The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to maintain these records for a period of two years.

(3)

These records were made available to the authorised person on the day of 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

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

(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)

The service operates out of three care rooms, the baby/toddler room is located on the ground floor and consists of large open plan area. The main playroom is equipped with a variety of equipment to suit the age and stage of the young preschool children. Low level open shelving stocked with dolls, jigsaws, puzzles, musical toys, cars, tractors, dinosaurs, small world toys and farm animals. The floor covering is a road map of a town, so children can play with cars on the tracks or follow the road. Fine motor activities and pull along toys for younger children as well as a kitchen and resources create opportunities for developing the imagination. In this room, free play is encouraged, and the children spend time moving from one activity to another choosing their own sense of play. There is ample space for younger children learning to walk so they can move around freely. On the day the inspector observed a structured activity where the younger children engaged in an art activity, learning about colours and exploring their creativity.

On the first floor, two preschools are in operation. Both rooms are equipped with a variety of resources to educate the preschool child these include magnet boards, peg boards, puzzles, jigsaws and Montessori

equipment. Shops, kitchens and resources allow for role and imaginative play. A large library facilitates language development and arts and crafts equipment to include sensory items promote creativity.

These preschool rooms cater for a small number of children, five in preschool one and six in preschool two supported by two staff members. These smaller numbers allow for a supportive environment where children are given time to explore and learn. On the day, the inspector observed time given to a child who was struggling with language. The staff member ensured the child was supported, allowing them to finish their sentence without interruption thus promoting language development. Throughout the inspection children were given time to complete their structured tasks. Valentines was the theme for the week and children were making various valentine arts and crafts that included development of fine motor skills and creativity. Children were observed to cut, colour and glue. The children enjoyed showing their completed artwork to the inspector which included 'cards' and 'pizza my heart'.

(1) (b)

Staff members throughout the service were observed to be kind and considerate in their interactions. Downstairs with the younger children, staff members were observed to hold and give hugs to the younger children as needed. Children appeared happy and content as evidenced by the sound of laughter. In the preschools room there was a strong emphasis on independence and children were constantly praised and encouraged when completing tasks instilling confidence in the preschool children.

The service had a healthy eating policy in place and parents/guardians sent in the morning snack which included a variety of fruits, sandwiches, chesses and crackers and yoghurts. The main meal of the day was provided by the service and cooked on site. On the day the younger children had chicken stew, and the older children had potato mash, carrots and beef.

Children who were nappies were supported as per the service policy in a respectful and dignified manner. Older children were encouraged to use the bathroom independently.

The service appeared to have developed a good relationship with parents with generations of the same family attending the service. Communication with parents was mainly verbal at handovers on collection and drop offs Private messages were also sent individually to mobile phones if required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The main entrance door was secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available throughout the service for the safe disposal of waste.
- All windows were risk assessed with restrictors in place.
- Staircases were adequately lit with two safety banisters provided.
- Highchairs were in good condition with safety harnesses fitted.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with high wooden fencing and a locked gate.
- Cleaning products were stored out of the reach of preschool children.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available for safe hand hygiene.
- Tables were cleaned after messy play and prior to snack times.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day, however on discussion with staff, they were knowledgeable about the procedures in place for safe medication administration.

Safe Sleep:

- Physical sleep checks were completed every ten minutes and documented.
- The sleep room temperature was maintained within the recommended safe sleep temperatures.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors remained clear and unobstructed throughout the day.
- Fire evacuation plans were clearly displayed in all care rooms.
- The fire assembly point is located to the front of the building.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. One child had whole grapes in their lunch box sent in from home which is a choking risk. When the inspector brought this to the attention of staff, they were removed until they could be cut and made safe
2. A flex in the sleep room leading to a security camera was not secure. This poses a safety risk to the preschool child.

Infection Control:

3. Hand hygiene was not completed routinely prior to snack time in preschool 2.
4. The paper towel dispenser in the bathroom for preschool children is positioned out of reach for preschool children, therefore posing a risk of infection control.

Safe Sleep:

5. The two standard cots in the sleep room did not have the required waterproof mattresses covers resulting in an infection control risk.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A memo was sent to all parents regarding this. Parents now cut the grapes up for children prior to sending them to preschool. All staff members will check this going forward.
2. We have a plug-in camera set up for when our service is closed. Prior to a child been put to sleep this camera is plugged out and removed from the sleep room.

Infection Control:

3. Staff were reminded about our hand washing procedure before eating and after messy play and other activities
4. A second-hand dispenser in operation within the child's reach. Staff were spoken to ensuring going forward that hand towel is accessible to children at all times in both dispensers

Safe Sleep:

5. The service purchased 2 waterproof protective mattress covers the following day.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence submitted.
2. Documentary evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

3. Documentary evidence submitted.
4. Photographic evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

5. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

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

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1)
The registered provider demonstrated evidence of the preschool children being signed in and out of the service daily.
- (3) (a) (b)
The registered provider ensured that any unpaid worker / visitor to the service was approved to enter and a record of this visit was maintained with the visitors contact details.
- (4)
The registered provider is aware of the statutory requirement to maintain this record for a period of one year.

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 registered provider ensured that an adult trained in first aid for children is available to the preschool children at all times. Three adults employed in the service had First Aid responder training.
- (2) (a) (b)
A suitably stocked first aid box was safely stored within the service and available to the preschool children as required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated adequate insurance up to the 27th of March 2025 for a maximum of 25 children in a full day care service.