

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015SO034		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Leprechauns Creche & Montessori		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Willowbrook Centre, Bellaghy, Charlestown, Co. Sligo		
<b>Eircode:</b>	n/a		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Cathy Davey		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	13/11/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	65	PM 51
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L Costello		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.		

### Description of service

The service is registered to accommodate children aged 1-6 years. The service provides full day care, part time and sessional options. The service is located in a small rural village in south Sligo on the Mayo border. The building is purpose built with five care rooms a kitchen, office area, staff room and sanitary accommodation. There is a large outdoor space to the rear and side of the property.

### Staffing

The registered provider confirmed that 17 adults are employed in the service. This includes the registered provider, a person in charge, two cooks and fourteen adults working directly 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, 16, 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.

### Additional Information

The registered provider received two opportunities to submit corrective and preventive actions on the 25 November 2025 and on the 10 December 2025. Despite these opportunities some regulations remain outstanding.

### 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.*

*(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.*

*(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. The person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear line of governance in place with staff members aware of their roles and responsibilities. Governance structure included manager, person in charge, supervisor, room leaders and childcare workers.

(2) (a) (b)

There is a total of seventeen adults employed in the service with one member of staff currently on leave. Sixteen files of the adults currently working in the service were reviewed.

Twenty-three written and verified past employer references and eight written and verified references from an other source was available in respect of the sixteen adults.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the fifteen adults working directly with preschool children. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

One adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more had the required international police vetting.

(4)  
Fifteen 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, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

One adult did not have the required second written validated reference on file. It was evident in the adult's employment history that they had past employment.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(2) (a) (b)

I requested 2nd reference form employee and I'm waiting for that reference to be furnished.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

No evidence submitted.

### Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions did not adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation remains outstanding.

## 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.*

*(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.

(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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children. 11 adults were working directly with 65 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service on the morning.

(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:

- Toddler room: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged from 2 to 3 years of age.
- Preschool 2 Room: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Wobbler room: 2 adults cared for 7 children aged from 1 year to 2 years of age.
- Preschool 1 Room: 3 adults cared for 18 children from 2.8 years to 5 years of age.
- Montessori Room: 2 adults cared for 18 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age.

In the afternoon the following ratios were observed:

- Toddler room: 2 adults cared for 9 children aged from 2 to 3 years of age.
- Preschool 2 Room: 2 adults cared for 8 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Wobbler room: 2 adults cared for 7 children aged from 1 year to 2 years of age.
- Preschool 1 Room: 3 adults cared for 13 children from 2.8 years to 5 years of age.
- Montessori Room: 2 adults cared for 14 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age.

## 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:*

*(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.*

*(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.*

*(4) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by a parent or guardian of a child but only in respect of information concerning that child.*

### Compliance Information

(1) (i)

The service had a rolling roster in place and evidence of daily attendance of staff members was reflected on the service information technology application.

(1) (j)

Medication administration records were made available for review on a tablet application. A sample of ten records across the service were reviewed. Evidence of the type of medication administered, the amount, reason for administration, consent and oversight by management was available in all records reviewed.

(1) (k)

The service documents all accidents and incidents in the service. Incidents are recorded on an application allowing notification to parents in real time. Of a sample of incidents reviewed across the service. there was evidence of the type of incident, risk assessments completed, first aid administration and notification to parents or guardians.

(3)

These records were made available to the inspector on the day.

(4)

The application in place for recording of records allows for notification to parents in respect of their own child.

### 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 19 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)

There are five care rooms in the service all five are set up with consideration of the age and stage of development of the child attending the room.

The 'Toddler room' caters for children aged between two and three years and resources provided include toys for this age group that are of an appropriate size. Open level shelving stocked with a variety of tabletop activities, jigsaws and puzzles with interest corners of home area, construction areas, arts and crafts and sensory tables.

There is a suitable amount of age-appropriate furniture to meet the needs of the children.

The 'wobbler room' caters for the younger children who require space for movement to crawl and learning to walk. This room has much of its resources on lower levels ensuring access to the age of the child. Soft matting and teddies allow for comfort while musical toys promote fine motor skills and encourage language development. Mirrors and pull up bars promote independence and children are observed to move around freely directing their own sense of play. The room is provided with highchairs for the younger children and low-level child sized for those children who are slightly older.

The older children's rooms of 'Preschool 1', 'Preschool 2' and 'Montessori 1', provide stepping stones as the children get older introducing different toys and resources suitable to the developing child. All rooms are well laid out with a variety of interest areas to stimulate the imagination of the preschool child. Opportunities for imaginary and role play in the form of home corners and dress up are provided. Creativity is facilitated through arts and crafts. Extensive libraries promote language development, and a wide range of Montessori based equipment provide learning opportunities for the preschool child. Equipment in the older children's room are stored for easy access of the child. There are ample table and chairs to provide for tabletop activities and mealtimes.

(1) (b)

The outdoor area is appropriately secure with a high wooden fence. Resources provide opportunities for gross motor skill development with slides, tyres, bikes and trikes, mud kitchens and playhouses. Positive risk is encouraged as children learn to climb and manoeuvre tasks.

The surface area consists of an area of grass and tarmac allowing for various activities for team activities such as football as well as riding bikes and tractors.

### 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

The registered provider demonstrated that adequate and suitable nutritious and varied food is available to the preschool child.

The service provides meals to all children attending a full day care service. On the day of inspection morning snack consisted of a fruit platter and toast. The main meal of the day was chicken and pasta in a tomato-based sauce for the older children, while the younger children had chicken potato and carrots. The evening snack consisted of brioche and jam. On discussion with the cook in the service, meals are planned on the preferences of the preschool children in line with the service healthy eating policy. Alternatives are provided as required, for example pasta without sauce. The cook confirmed that there is no allergies at present however they do cater for allergies and food choices.

### 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, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.

- All waste was inaccessible to the preschool child.

### Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to snack times and after messy play.
- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available for effective hand hygiene.
- The older children were observed to wash their hands prior to mealtimes. After using the toilet and after messy play.
- Noses were wiped as required and children were observed to use appropriate cough etiquette thus reducing the risk of spreading of infection.

### Administration of Medication:

- While no medication was observed to be administered on the day, on discussion with the staff in the service they were knowledgeable about the service medication administration policy.

### Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room for those children under two with 10 standard cots with the required mattress and waterproof protectors. Cellular blankets and sleeping bags were also available for the children.
- The service had stackable floor beds for children over two years of age requiring sleep or rest throughout the day.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation doors remained free from obstruction throughout the day.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. The radiator covers in the toddler room were broken posing a risk of injury to the preschool child.
2. Garda vetting was available for sixteen staff members. However, six of these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
3. Medication in the toddler room was stored in a fridge in the room with no lock therefore accessible to the preschool child, posing a safety risk.
4. The mechanical ventilation in the wobbler and toddler rooms was not working correctly on the day of inspection. It was confirmed by the registered provider at closing meeting that they were broken and due for maintenance.

## Infection Control:

5. Children's hands were not routinely washed after nappy changes as observed the wobbler and toddler room. This poses a risk of spread of infection.
6. The morning snack of toast was served directly onto the table as opposed to a plate which posed a risk of contamination.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

In a written response the registered provider stated that:

1. Radiator covers were removed; we will ensure all broken equipment is discarded and replaced.
2. Garda vetting has been applied for.
- 3 There is now a lock on the medication fridge.
4. No response received for the non-compliance identified.

## Infection Control:

5. Children are now assisted to wash their hands after nappy change.
6. Plates are now left on the table for the children to eat off.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. No evidence submitted.
2. No evidence submitted.
3. Photographic evidence submitted on the 15 December 2025.
4. No evidence submitted.

## Infection Control:

5. No evidence submitted
6. No evidence submitted.

## Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions were reviewed by the inspectorate. Regulation 23.3 has been accepted. Regulation 23.1, 23.2, 23.5 and 23.6 remain outstanding as no evidence was submitted. Regulation 23.4 remain outstanding as no corrective or preventive action and evidence was submitted.

### 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 demonstrated that there was a suitable number of adults trained in first aid for children available to the preschool children throughout the hours of operation.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

First aid boxes were available throughout the service, however the equipment available had expiry dates between 2022 and January 2025.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

In a written response the registered provider stated:  
First aid boxes are now fully stocked with in date equipment.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographic evidence submitted on the 15 December 2025.

#### Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now complaint.

### 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-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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) (b)

The registered provider demonstrated that all fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained annually with the most recent maintenance date of 2 April 2025.

(2) (c)

These records were made available to the inspector on the day.

(3)

The registered provider is aware of the statutory requirement to retain these documents the period set out in regulation.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures are clearly displayed in all care rooms of the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The service had completed emergency fire evacuation drills. However, the most recent evacuation drill occurred on the 15 August 20025 contrary to the required monthly fire evacuation drills which could pose a safety risk to the preschool child.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the Registered provider stated:

A fire drill has been completed and we will ensure they are completed monthly.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

No evidence submitted.

**Summary Comment**

The corrective and preventive actions adequately address the non compliance however no evidence of this action was submitted. Therefore, this regulation remains outstanding.

**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**

The registered provider demonstrated that the children were supervised at all times adequately.

While playing indoors in the care rooms, the adults moved around the rooms ensuring the children were supervised and offering assistance if required. During specific tasks such as science experiments, the adults positioned themselves to ensure all children were safe and supported to participate in the activity. In the older children’s rooms, where some children chose to complete one task the remainder children were supervised by another adult. The younger children were supervised at all times ensuring that those children who were starting to walk were supported with the adults ensuring clear pathways for the children’s first steps.

Meal times were observed to be a pleasant experience where the adults sat alongside the children promoting a calm atmosphere, supporting the children’s independence while offering assistance if and when required.

Sleep time was supervised appropriately with adults present in the rooms of the older children on stackable floor beds. The younger children had a designated sleep room with standard cots, and the children were supervised once settled in ten-minute intervals and these checks were recorded on an application.