

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015SO036
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Pathways Creche & Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Dorrins Strand, Strandhill, Co. Sligo
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F91 X316
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Caroline Gannon
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	17/02/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	44	PM	38
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<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

### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
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### Description of service

Little pathways Crèche and Montessori is a privately owned, purpose built childcare facility which has been in operation since 2008. It is located in a residential area in the seaside town of Strandhill, Co. Sligo. Full day, part time and sessional care for children from one to six years of age is offered. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 17:30. The facility is in a two-storey building but the service operates from the ground floor only. There are four preschool rooms in operation currently, Teddy bear room, Happy Clowns, Junior ECCE and Montessorri.

### Staffing

On the day of inspection thirteen adults were employed in the service. Nine adults worked directly with the children on the day. One adult worked in the Kitchen. Two adults employed were on leave. The registered provider works 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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)(a)

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

(b)

The deputy person in charge facilitated the inspection and was present throughout the day.

(c)

On discussion with the adults in the service, they were familiar of their roles and responsibilities. The line of governance was clearly identified with childcare workers, room leaders, deputy person in charge and manager.

(2)

There are 13 adults employed in the service including the registered provider. An additional adult was present on the day on a work placement.

(a) (b)

23 written and verified past employer references and 5 references from another source were available in respect of all 14 adults.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosure were available for all 14 adults in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

Twelve 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.

## 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)  
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:

- Teddy Bear Room (pod 1): 3 adults cared for 9 children aged 1 to 2 years of age.
- Happy Clowns Room (pod 2): 2 adults cared for 10 children aged from 2 to 3 years of age.
- ECCE Junior 2 (pod 3): 1 adult cared for 8 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Montessori (pod 4): 2 adults cared for 17 children aged from 4 years to 5 years of age.

8)(a)

The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample of attendance records reviewed

## Non-Compliance Information

(2)  
During afternoon sleep and rest time in the 'Happy Clowns room' one adult supervised 9 children aged 2 years of age sleeping on stackable floor beds. Minimum ratios of adults to children apply to children when sleeping.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

A member of in ratio staff, will be rostered on to assist with the happy clown sleep (Pod 2 ) time 12.30-2pm to maintain the 1 adult :6 children ratio. This will provide adequate supervision to ensure the safety and welfare of children is always adhered too. In addition, all staff have read the Early Years Inspectorate Pre- School Service Question and Answers Document Version 6 2024 to stay up to date with guidelines.

### Supporting documentation submitted

- Roster submitted.

## Summary Comment

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

## 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 (f) 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.*

*(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.*

*(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in 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.*

## Compliance Information

1) (a-i)

Ten records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year's inspector.

(4)

The deputy person in charge confirmed that the records are retained for the required period as set out in the regulations.

## 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.*

*(2) A registered provider-*

*(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or*

*(b) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that moves premises on or after 30 June 2016,*

*shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The service consisted of four large playrooms each one assigned for use by different groups of children. There were adequate and suitable indoor play facilities available in each room for the age range of children attending. The rooms presented as bright and visually appealing spaces with an orderly arrangement of play equipment and materials set into clearly defined areas of interest. These included arts and crafts, construction, small world items, dress up props, play kitchen areas, library's, sensory tables, areas to rest and relax, problem solving toys and range of manipulate play resources. Open low level shelving units enabled all items to be readily accessible to the children in all rooms and suitable sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities.

The Teddy bear room catered for children aged twelve months to two years contained a suitable play area for the younger child. This area included soft floor matting, wall mounted toys, baskets with play items, a ball pit with soft toys and a shatter proof mirror. 'Happy Clowns' caters for children aged 2 to 3 years of age, set up into defined interest areas to suit the age and stage of the group of children using the room. The room has ample space for ease of movement and low-level open shelving is equipped with a variety of baskets of musical toys, magnets, puzzles and arts and crafts.

'ECCE Junior' and 'Montessori' caters for the older children in preparation for transition to national school. Both rooms are set up with a variety of tabletop activities to promote counting and learning. The walls of the care room are decorated with the children's artwork and evidence of the curriculum they are learning. Resources and materials are age appropriate and suitable to the stage of development for this group of children.

(1)(b)

The service has one designated sleep room adjacent Teddy bear room. The sleep room contained six cots to provide for the sleep needs of the younger children. Each cot was fitted with a mattress containing the required safety label. A shelving unit provided individual storage of bed linen for each child. Stackable floor beds were available for use in the 'Happy Clowns' room and were observed to be used with blankets for comfort and rest on the day. Each of the rooms caring for older children were equipped with suitable and comfortable rest areas including soft floor mats, soft cushions and child size soft chairs and settee.

(2)(a) (b)

There is one designated outdoor play areas located centrally in the building with direct access from each care room. The area is secure with high level block fencing and secured gates.

The outdoor area had a shock absorbing ground surface, and one area was partly roofed providing shelter in inclement weather. Resources included mud kitchens, climbing frames, tyres, and slides. A large storage shed contained a range of play items that could be brought to the areas for children's play including ride on toys, hoops, cones, balls and digging toys.

## 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 are prepared and cooked on site. The morning snack provided included fresh fruit and pancakes in celebration of 'Shrove Tuesday'. The main meal was sausages, carrots and mash potato with gravy for the younger children and older children had pasta. Evening snack included a variety of sandwiches and fresh fruit.

On discussion with the cook in the service, they were knowledgeable about food preferences, intolerances and allergies. The cook spoke to the inspector of how they prepare food and ensure preferences and intolerances are supported. The service is a nut free zone due to a child with an allergy to nuts.

Fresh water is provided in all care rooms and served at mealtimes.

### Non-Compliance Information

On discussion with staff working on the day of inspection, main meals include fish fingers, sausages, breaded chicken weekly. The service menu plan for the week evidenced the discussion with staff. This is in contradiction to the service healthy eating policy where it states that 'processed meats or chicken products cannot be provided'.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

In line with the Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Settings, we have updated our menus to include a wide variety of healthy suitable fresh food. We have educated all staff on the importance of serving less processed meats. We also have educated the children on healthy foods and importance of trying new foods. We have provided the HI Healthy Ireland – Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Settings is available for all staff and parents to read

#### Supporting documentation submitted

- Healthy menu plan 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 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 doors leading out of care rooms had high handles ensuring children could not leave areas without staffs' knowledge.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins stored out of reach of children.
- The boundary of the premises was secured with high level fencing preventing children for exiting the premises unsupervised. The entry and exit routes from the building were secured with a buzzer system alerting staff to the arrival of parents or visitors.
- The equipment and materials in use on the day were well maintained and free from hazards. Records demonstrated that a risk assessment was carried out by staff prior to the use of the outdoor play area.

### Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning schedules displayed and up to date in each care room.
- Nappy changes were carried out in line with infection control procedures.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. An immediate action notice was issued on the day of inspection where water temperatures in the 'Teddy Bear' room measured at 58.2°C which posed a risk of scalding. The registered provider responded to this notice on the day by using an alternative sink for hand hygiene.

#### Infection Control:

2. Snack was served directly on to blue roll in the 'Montessori' room posing a risk of contamination.
3. Three of the cots in the sleep room did not have the required waterproof protective covers to prevent a risk of infection.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

In a written response the registered provider stated:

1. The plumber fitted a thermostatic (TMV) mixer valve to the sink in question to reduce the water temperature before it comes out of the tap. The water temperature was checked and its running at 36 degrees now which is perfect for smaller children.

#### Infection Control:

2. All snacks are now served on plates or in bowls.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. Documentary and photographic evidence submitted.

#### Infection Control:

2. 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 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)  
On the day of inspection two staff members on duty were trained in first aider response (FAR) training and were available to children attending the preschool service.

(2) (a) (b).

Fully stocked first aid boxes are available in each of the care rooms and are available to children at all times

## 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

Children were observed to be adequately supervised at all times on the day of inspection.

During indoor play in all care rooms, staff members working in teams were observed to communicate well with each other ensuring all children were supervised by sight. Staff members lone working were observed to be attentive when children moved from indoors to outdoors, completing head counts and ensuring all children were accounted for.

The outdoor area was well designed ensuring no blind spots were present in the courtyard. The area was secured with high block fencing and high locked wooden gates creating a safe enclosed area to play.

At mealtimes staff members sat alongside the children supervising and ensuring safety while promoting independence in feeding and encouraging social conversation.