

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO051		
Name of Service:	Sandcastles Childcare Centre		
Address of Service:	Enniscrone, Enniscrone, Co. Sligo		
Eircode:	F26 KC81		
Name of Registered Provider:	Justina Reape		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	21/01/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	84	PM 62
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, M Farrell.		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		

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

This service is a community based, purpose built childcare facility which has been in operation since 2007. It is located on the edge of the seaside town of Enniscrone in Co. Sligo. Full day, part time and sessional care for children from 0-6 years of age is offered. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 18:30 hours.

Staffing

There were twenty-one adults present on the day of inspection and of these, seventeen were working directly with the children. The manager and deputy manager did not work in the playrooms on the day. Two designated adults worked in the kitchen. The registered provider does not work in the service. An adult student on work placement was present in the service on the day.

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, 15, 16, 20, 22, 23 and 27. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(1) (b)

The person in charge remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2) (a) (b).

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that 9 new staff members had been employed since the last inspection.

Eight of these new staff members work directly with the children. One student was present on an educational work placement programme. A total of 9 files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for 14 staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

Sixteen written and verified past employer references and one written and verified references from a reputable source in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of the nine adults in the service.

(2) (c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 24 adults

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years

(4)

Documentary evidence was presented to demonstrate that eight staff members had obtained 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

One reference on file for one staff member was from a source other than a past employer. This staff member had previous employment listed on their employment records therefore the reference required is from their past employers

(2) (d)

International police vetting was not available for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the person acting on behalf of the registered provider stated:

(2) (a) (b)

A reference was sought from a second previous employer. The service will review employment records and cross check employment to references provided for all employees.

(2) (d)

Police vetting was sought and obtained. The service will review employment records in great detail and ensure all documents are in order before commencing employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Reference submitted.
- International police vetting submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the person acting on behalf of the registered provider have been accepted and this regulation is now compliant.

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 17 adults working directly with 77 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. One adult covered break time. One adult student was also present in the playrooms.

(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:

- Bright stars playroom: 2 adults cared for 13 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Shooting stars playroom: 3 adults cared for 15 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Little stars playroom: 3 adults cared for 18 children aged from 4 years to 5 years of age.
- Tweenies playroom: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Little Smarties playroom: 2 adults cared for 12 children aged from 2 years to 3 years of age.
- Baby room: 2 adults cared 6 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.
- Mini Minors room: 2 adults cared for 9 children aged from 2 to 3 years of age.

In the afternoon at approximately 14:36 the following ratios were observed:

- Bright stars playroom: closed
- Shooting stars playroom: 3 adults cared for 15 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.

- Little stars playroom: 3 adults cared for 11 children aged from 4 years to 5 years of age.
- Tweenies playroom: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged from 3 years to 4 years of age.
- Little Smarties playroom: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged from 2 years to 3 years of age.
- Baby room: 2 adults cared 5 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.
- Mini Minors room: 2 adults cared for 9 children aged from 2 to 3 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

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (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 available on file for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early years inspector.

(4)

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

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (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-

(a) all documents and records relating to references and Garda and police vetting obtained under Regulation 9(2) are retained for a period of 5 years from the date on which the person to whom the document or record relates commences working in the service, and

(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)

The registered provider ensured that appropriate records were kept in relation to the service.

(a) Employee, unpaid worker and contractors' records were maintained in the staff office.

(b-f) Details of the type of service, adult child ratios, programme of care, the facilities available and opening hours were clearly displayed on notice boards throughout the service.

(g) Policies and procedures were available in a hard copy at the reception desk for review by parents or staff members.

(h) Each care room kept accurate attendance records of the children in the service.

(i) Staff rosters including start and finish times were recorded in the staff room and office.

(j) A sample of medication records were reviewed, they had the appropriate consent, details of administration and staff signatures in place.

(k) A sample of accident incident records recorded in a record book were reviewed and found to contain the required information and had been signed by the appropriate people.

(2) (a)

The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain all records in relation to regulation (9) (2) for a period of five years from commencement in the service.

(2) (b)

The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain attendance records, medication records and accident and incident records for two years after the child the record relates to ceases to attend the service.

(3)

All records were made available to the inspectors on the day.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
 - (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.
- (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 seven large playrooms each one assigned for use by different age 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, relaxing areas, problem solving toys and wide range of manipulate play resources. Open low level shelving units enabled all items to be readily accessible to the children, and suitable sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities.

The 'baby room' catered for children aged one to two years, one area was separated for mealtimes and consisted of highchairs and equipment for mealtimes. The play area was spacious with ample free floor space for child to manoeuvre through. Wall mounted toys, pull up bars and a shatter roof mirror supported development of the young child. Baskets of soft toys, musical instruments and cars and resources were available for the preschool children. 'Little smarties room', catered for children between two to three years of age. Resources and materials

in this room supported the age and stage of development with appropriately sized furniture and interest areas set up to suit the needs of the child. ‘Tweenies’, ‘mini minors’ and ‘little stars’ had a focus on child led play with resources stored on low level shelving, where children were observed to choose what they wished to play with. Tuff trays were used throughout the service where children explored and discovered new textures, smells and colours. For example, in the Shooting Stars playroom, children played in a group at a sensory table with coloured rice, scraps of foil and plastic scoops. Messy play was facilitated in the Bright Stars playroom with playdough, water and sand. There was a messy play table with blue coloured rice and plastic toys in the Mini Minors playroom accessible at a low level to the children. Each playroom had age-appropriate books that children had easy access to.

(1) (b)

The baby room had a designated sleep room equipped with four standard cots. Each cot was fitted with a mattress containing the required safety label which had a waterproof covering. The tweenies room had a designated sleep room adjacent to their care room which had four stackable floor beds. ‘Little Smarties’ and ‘mini minors’ shared one sleep room that was situated between the two rooms. This room was equipped with 3 standard cots and stackable floor beds. Each of the rooms caring for older children were equipped with suitable and comfortable rest areas including soft floor mats and soft cushions.

(2) (a) (b)

There were three separate designated outdoor play areas, each one suitably equipped to provide safe play areas for children outdoors. An outdoor area to the rear of the building was undergoing development works including the installation of artificial grass ground cover and was not in use at the time of the inspection. There was a large outdoor area at the front of the building with numerous opportunities for play including a music wall, mud kitchen, balance equipment, a wooden playhouse named the “scoil” and a large wooden car. Picnic table seating was provided and there were chalkboards on the fence area for children to draw on. Children from different playrooms were observed to play in the enclosed sheltered play area adjacent to the building during the day supervised by staff. They played with a range of toys including ride on toys, rocker toys, running around and enjoying physical exercise and there was seating provided if they needed to rest.

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 children availing of the full day care service have all meals provided by the service. On the day of inspection, the meals included breakfast of cereal and toast, morning snack of fruit and rice cakes. The main meal of the day was mashed potato, carrots and chicken with gravy. The children who attended for a sessional service brought their lunches from home in line with the service healthy eating policy. Lunches included yoghurts, fruit, brioche, cheese and crackers and a variety of sandwiches. Drinking water was available in all rooms accessible to the children throughout the day.

Allergies and food preferences were catered for. All rooms had a list of allergies in the services and the cooks on site was aware of same.

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.
- A section of the outdoor area was not in operation on the day of the inspection as a new ground surface and fencing was being installed for the safety of the preschool children.
- 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.
- Highchairs in the baby room were fitted with the appropriate harness safety straps and were maintained in good condition.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.

Infection Control:

- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- 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.
- Children were observed to wash their hands regularly including before snacks and meals. Child friendly hand wash posters with picture instructions were placed above the wash basins

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of the inspection. On discussion with staff members they were knowledgeable of the administration of medication policy and steps to be taken if a child required medication.

Safe Sleep:

- Physical sleep checks were observed to occur in the baby room in regular ten-minute intervals. These included the position of the child, breathing pattern, status and temperature.
- Standard cots were available and used for the younger children to rest/sleep in, while stackable floor beds were available for those over two years of age.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation doors remained free of hazards on the day.
- Fire evacuation plans were clearly displayed on the walls of the care rooms with the emergency evacuation assembly point clearly identifiable in the car park.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The spacing of the floor beds in the little smarties sleep room was less than the required 50cm posing a risk of cross infection to the preschool child.
2. The nappy changing procedures observed in the tweenies room were not in line with best practice and posed a risk of contamination, where children were observed to be dressed with soiled gloves after the dirty nappy was removed.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

In a written response the person acting on behalf of the registered provider stated:

1. As sleep is now facilitated in the care room following inspection, there is more space to allow for 50cms between beds.
2. Reviewed nappy changing and infection control policies with the staff team at a staff meeting dated 27th Jan 26. Management will observe and support staff if required during nappy changing time.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

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

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the person acting on behalf of the registered provider have been accepted and this regulation is now compliant and this regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

Supervision during play time both indoors and outdoors was observed to be adequate. During play indoors, staff members were observed to communicate well with each other, maintaining good teamwork, ensuring each member of staff was responsible for a group of children throughout play. This ensured that children were supervised effectively by staff members sitting alongside a group during play activities.

Outdoor play was well supervised with staff members strategically positioned to monitor all areas. Staff actively engaged with children, managed risk appropriately and ensured that supervision levels remained consistent across the outdoor play area.

Appropriate supervision was maintained during personal care routines in a manner that respected children's dignity privacy and individual needs while ensuring safety and well-being. In the older children's rooms, independence was promoted in toileting, where staff members were in ear shot, offering prompts and assistance

if required. In the younger children's rooms, children were supervised appropriately at mealtimes, where they were encouraged to self-feed. Staff members positioned themselves beside the younger child guiding and encouraging and assisting when required.

Non-Compliance Information

On the afternoon of the inspection, no adult remained in the room supervising while children from the 'little smarties' and 'tweenies room' slept on floor beds.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Following inspection all children sleeping on stackable beds over 24months will now be fully supervised in the care rooms by the staff members.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the person acting on behalf of the registered provider have been accepted and this regulation is now compliant and this regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.