

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO065
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Name of Service:	Toddlers Den Creche & Scholars Den Afterschool Club
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Address of Service:	25/26 Stella Maris, Ballisodare, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 PF30
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona Mullen Brown
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	19
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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).

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Description of service

Toddlers Den Crèche is a privately run full day care early years' service. It is located in a housing estate in Ballisodare town 7km south of Sligo town. The service operating hours are 07:30 to 17:45, weekdays, for children aged 1-6years. This includes a morning sessional service from 09.30-12.30pm. A registered school age service is also provided. The building is comprised of two semi-detached bungalows that have been amalgamated which consists of four indoor playrooms.

Staffing

There were nine adults employed in the service at the time of inspection. This included six adults working directly with children in the playrooms and the registered provider in a supernumerary capacity as manager and staff support. One adult worked in the kitchen. One adult was employed to work in the school age service only.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16k, 16j, 20, 23, 27 and 28.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Children's records and Regulation 16k accident and incident records.

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, 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,*

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(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)

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

(1)(b)

The named person in charge facilitated the inspection. On a review of staff attendance records, the person in charge or deputy persons were always available on the premises during operating hours.

(1)(b)

There was a clear management structure with room leaders and childcare workers identified.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that three new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. Two of these new staff members work directly with the pre-school children.

A total of three files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for six staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

(a)(b)

Six written and validated references from a past employer were available in respect of the three adults.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for nine 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)

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Two 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) (d)

International police vetting was required for one member of staff employed in the service who works with the school aged children as that person has lived outside the state for a period of six months or ore as an adult.

(3)

The registered provider did not demonstrate that all vetting procedures had been completed prior to an adult having access to children as outlined in (2) (d) above.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(2)(d)

International Child Protection Certificate was applied for and received. This has been placed on her file All new Staff will be required to have correct vetting documentation before they commence working in the service.

(3)

Vetting procedures have been reviewed and the service will make sure going forward that all vetting is correct prior to any new staff been employed and having access to children in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) (d) International police vetting submitted.

(3) N/A

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider have been reviewed by the inspectorate and adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now complaint.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1)

There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were six adults working directly with 28 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection and six adults working directly with 19 children in the afternoon. The person in charge was available to cover breaks as required.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

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;*

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(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-

(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.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (a-g, i.)

A random sample of nine 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 and emergency contact a completed for each child.

(3) (a)

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

(4)

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

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(i)

The records of a immunisations if any for two children were not available. This information is required to support the safety of the children should an outbreak of an infectious disease break out within the service.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(1)(i)

The parents were asked to provide up to date immunisation records and this was provided by both parents. All children's medical records will be checked regularly and parents will be asked to update immunisation as it occurs on their child/children's medical form.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(i) Updated vaccination records 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 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:

(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.

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(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)(k)

Eight accident and incidents had occurred in the service since the 1 January 2026. All records provided evidence of the accident or incident, any first aid that had to be required and evidence of a risk assessment been completed. Parents were notified of all incidents occurring in the service.

(1)(j)

The registered provider confirmed that no medication had been administered in the service since the last recorded date in September 2024.

(2) (b)

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

(3)

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

(4)

These records were made available to the parent or the guardian of the child to which the record pertains as evidenced by parent signature.

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

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(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)

The registered provider ensured that the preschool children attending the service had adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play with both indoors and outdoors considering the child's age and stage of development.

'Wobbler Room': The wobbler room consists of two spaces operating as one with sanitary and sleep facilities adjacent to the care room. This room is equipped with appropriate child size table and chairs and three highchairs for the younger children. Toys and resources are suitable for the younger child with home corners to include kitchen, dolls, buggies and cots, construction areas with soft building blocks and tabletop activities to support the younger child.

The **'Toddler room'** supported children aged 2 to 3 years of age and was equipped with materials and resources for this age and stage of development. On the day children were observed to be participating in role and imaginary play with doctors set and hospital equipment. Other children were exploring fine motor skills with building blocks and tracks. The room had shelving out of reach of the children with a variety of resources including puzzles, tabletop activities and arts and crafts. These toys were observed to be introduced to the children and rotated within the service.

The **'Playschool room'** catered for the older child preparing for transitioning to national school. Child size tables and chairs were provided for mealtimes and tabletop activities. On the day of inspection, the children were observed to be participating in arts and crafts, making a table mat for use in the service. The room is equipped with various interest areas including home corners, construction areas and arts and crafts. Shelving with puzzles, jigsaws and tabletop activities provide opportunities for fine motor skill development.

The **'Outdoor area'** provides an alternative area of play for the children where they can develop gross motor skills in the open grass area. A sheltered area allows for outdoor activities in all weathers. Resources for play includes ride on toys, push toys, balance beams and playhouses. Sand trays and water trays allow for sensorial play. An area had been developed where children were learning how to plant seeds and water plants to see how flowers grow maintaining a link with nature.

(1)(b)

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A designated sleep room adjacent to the wobblers room is equipped with four standard cots. The cots are fitted with the required waterproof protector. Linnen is brought in from home weekly and all children have a basket of their own personal belongings. Children over two are provided with a stackable floor bed for sleep or rest time.

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 service was secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with high level green metal fencing and locked wooden gates.
- Cleaning products were stored on high shelving out of reach of the preschool child.
- The kitchen door remained closed with a high-level handle out of reach of preschool children.

Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to meals and after messy play.
- Children were observed to wash their hands prior to snack time and after using the bathroom.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day. On discussion with staff members, they were aware of the medication administration process.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had one designated sleep room with four standard cots.
- Stackable floor beds were available for those children over two that required sleep.
- The four standard cots were fitted with waterproof protector covers to ensure effective cleaning.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation routes were clearly displayed throughout the service.
- Emergency evacuation routes were kept clear of hazards on the day.
- Emergency assembly point was clearly identifiable at the rear of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

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General Safety:

1. The service did not have the required foot pedal operated bin in the preschool's sanitary accommodation, posing a risk of cross contamination.
2. Leads and flexes from televisions and CD players were hanging loosely in the playschool and wobbler room and required to be secured to prevent an injury to children.
3. The toilet seat in the adult toilet adjacent to the wobbler room was broken and required to be replaced

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider in a written response stated:

1. Two new foot pedal operated bin were purchased and were placed under both sinks in our preschool sanitary accommodation. Staff are aware to notify management if these bins are broken.
2. Leads and flexes have been made secure.
3. Toilet seat has been replaced and will be checked regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photograph of bins submitted.
2. Photograph of flexes secure submitted.
3. Photograph of toilet seat installed submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection.

Part VI - Safety

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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 ensured that on the day of inspection the children were supervised at all times.

The supervision was maintained indoors through appropriate staff deployment, clear sight lines and purposeful movement within the room. The staff members remain attentive and responsive ensuring children are supported guided and protected at all times.

During outdoor play staff members are strategically positioning to monitor all areas. Staff actively engage with children, manage risk appropriately and ensure that supervision levels remain consistent across the play area. Appropriate supervision was maintained during personal care routines in a manner that respects children's dignity privacy and individual needs while ensuring safety and well-being. At meal times the staff members sat alongside the children, supervising, prompting and offering support if necessary.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider, provided certification of appropriate insurance for a full day care service for 65 children.