

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY088
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Name of Service:	Bright Beginnings
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Address of Service:	The Steeples, Dualla Road, Cashel, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E25 PY86
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anne-Marie Ryan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional.
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Date of Inspection:	14/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
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Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton & Aileen Bradshaw.
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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

Bright Beginnings is a registered full day childcare service located in a purpose-built childcare building in “The Steeples” residential estate in Cashel town in south county Tipperary. The service provides full day, part-time and a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) childcare service. The service operates from 07:30 to 18:30 hours Monday to Friday and caters for children from 1 to 6 years of age.

Staffing

There were 15 staff members employed in the service which included the registered provider, a business administrator, a chef and caretaker. All 12 staff members who as part of their role in the service, were employed to work directly with the children attending the service held qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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, 19, 23, 27, and 32, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 25. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used under regulations 19, 23, 27 and 32. The scope of the inspection included observation in the four classrooms and inspection of the outdoor play area.

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

This inspection was triggered by receipt of information to the Inspectorate.

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) regarding absence of a Garda Vetting disclosure, which was not available for one staff member, was issued on the day of inspection. It is acknowledged that an adequate response to the Immediate Action Notice was received on the evening of the inspection.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy designated person in charge 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 no 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) The registered provider ensured that a designated person was in charge during the inspection. In addition, the registered provider arrived at 11.10am and was available to the inspectors during the inspection.

(c) Staff members verbally described the management structure within the service.

(2)(d) Police vetting was available for review for a staff member who had resided outside of the state for a period longer than six months.

(4) Evidence was available to demonstrate that 12 staff members who work directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) The inspectors reviewed 15 staff files including the files for 3 auxiliary staff members. While it is acknowledged that validated references were available for 14 staff members, there were no references available for 1 staff member.

(c) While Garda vetting was available for 14 staff members, an immediate action notice was issued as Garda vetting was not available for one staff member.

(3) On review of the staff file, records demonstrated that adequate vetting procedures had not been carried out prior to three staff members being employed in the service. Garda vetting was not in place prior to three staff members being employed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

Corrective and Preventive Action

2 (a)(b)(c) References unavailable for one staff- the person will not be on the premises until Garda vetting and references have been supplied and validated.

All references and vetting will be validated prior to anyone commencing employment.

(3) The registered provider states that Garda vetting was in place for the three staff members who had left the service and returned.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The responses submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 was always, during the inspection, an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children. An additional staff member and the deputy designated person in charge were supernumerary and available to provide support in any of the four classrooms in operation and to provide relief for staff breaks.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in each of the four classrooms on the morning and afternoon of the inspection.

In the **Junior Toddler room** there was 1 staff member directly caring for 4 children aged 1 to 2 years throughout the inspection. The deputy designated person in charge was also assigned to this classroom, helping with the care of the children, assisting with nappy changing procedures and sleep times, as well as providing relief for staff breaks. In the afternoon 3 children aged 1 to 2 years were cared for by 1 staff member.

In the **Senior Toddler room** there were 3 staff members directly caring for 8 children aged 2 years and eight months to 3 years throughout the inspection. One of the staff members in this room provided relief for staff breaks in the Montessori rooms as required.

In the **Junior Montessori room**, there were 2 staff members directly caring for 8 children aged 2 years and eight months to 4 years and in the afternoon 4 children remained with 1 staff member and moved to the Senior Montessori Room.

In the **Senior Montessori room** there were 15 children aged 3 to 5 years directly cared for by 3 staff members, throughout the morning of the inspection for the sessional ECCE which operated between the hours of 09:00 to

12:00. From 14:00 hours 11 children aged 3 to 5 years remained for the full day care service with 2 staff members and 4 children and 1 staff member joined from the Junior Montessori room.

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff the inspector was assured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

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

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) On observation in each of the four classrooms, the inspectors observed that each child's learning, development and well-being was considered in the creation of physical environments, development of daily schedules and curricular planning and in some cases for children with additional needs, the development of child centred plans.

Physical Environments

In each of the classrooms, children were observed to be engaged with the staff in child led activities or had opportunities to move around the classrooms freely exploring various areas of interest. Clear floor space was provided in each of the classrooms with younger children having safe space to crawl, pull themselves up on the secured furniture and practice walking. Staff were observed to promote these opportunities for physical development allowing children to enhance their balance, posture and co-ordination.

Staff were also observed to risk assess and promptly respond if they thought a child might fall or get hurt by a more mobile and active child as they negotiated their way around the room.

In one of the older classrooms the inspectors observed that a wooden platform had been placed next to a window as a child with additional needs liked to look out the window while completing tasks such as peg boards or jigsaws. Again, a staff member was close by, for times when the child liked to climb onto the windowsill to sit and look out.

The activity was physically challenging for the child who was observed to display great dexterity in turning and twisting to get comfortable on the windowsill while also completing a jigsaw task.

Each classroom was carefully planned with areas of interest appropriate to the ages of the children in attendance. There were kitchen and home corners, dress-up areas, rest and reading areas, construction areas and arty and creativity areas.

Some classrooms had visual photographic labels on storage boxes so children could clearly see what play resources were stored in them. In the junior toddler room sensory boards had been created out of a variety of materials such as artificial grass, soft velvet, bubble material and enclosed plastic boxes of pom poms or beads which the children could touch and move to see the contents rotate inside.

Low level shelving was provided in each of the classrooms affording all the children with opportunities to choose activities, toys or play resources that they wanted to play with.

Staff had helped the children create areas of familiarity in the classrooms to promote each child's identity and belonging such as family walls and birthday walls with photos of each child and their families.

Children's Basic and Individual Care Needs

Children's independence and privacy were considered and promoted by the staff, with staff talking gently to the children if they demonstrated cues for toileting or required a nappy change. The staff responded to each child's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to nappy changing, toileting and toilet training, ensuring their privacy and dignity was always respected.

Meals and snacks were provided by the service with parents informed that snacks could be bought from home if required once they were in line with the service's healthy eating policy.

At snack and dinner time the staff and children transitioned seamlessly into preparation mode, washing their hands, taking turns in some rooms to pass out individually laminated place mats, while in the younger toddler rooms the children sat together with their key workers while awaiting their snacks.

Morning snack at 10:25 hours was observed to consist of apple slices, yogurts and bread sticks with options of water or milk to drink. Appropriate eating utensils, dishes and glasses were provided at each meal. Each classroom had a designated drink station which the inspector observed the junior and senior toddlers managed very well, identifying their own beakers or bottles.

Where some children had bought their own personal snacks from home, staff explained to their friends who queried this, that it was a choice for everyone and explained that the children's parents had selected the snack items in line with the service's healthy eating policy.

At dinner time, minced beef stew with vegetables and mashed potato was served. In the junior toddler room as the staff sat with and fed the children, the inspector observed that a variety of vegetables, corn, peas and carrots had been blended into the stew. The staff sat with the children in the senior toddler room, having some stew themselves while chatting to the children and demonstrating positive social skills. The inspectors observed that bowls were cleared and where a child desired some more, staff obtained it from the kitchen.

A four-week menu plan had been created by the chef offering morning snack, a variety of hot meals at lunch time, such as fish goujons, beef stew, pasta bolognaise, chicken stew, homemade pizza, and an evening meal consisting of a carbohydrate, dairy product and fruit or vegetable.

Breakfasts were also provided to children who arrived early to the service, which included a variety of cereals, milk and toast.

Individual children's sleep needs were met on a need's basis, with staff responding to children's cues of tiredness and supporting them with settling for naps according to each child's individual needs and the hours that they are in the service.

Each classroom had a rest and relaxation area where children could go to take a break from activities or to relax and read the appropriate reading materials in each.

Relationships and interactions around children

In each of the four classrooms the inspectors observed staff demonstrating positive interactions with the children in their care.

Each child was assigned to a key worker for the purpose of communicating the child's progress to parents on a daily or weekly basis and for developing curricular planning around the child's learning needs and emergent interests. The inspectors observed key workers taking time to update parents on children's progress at collection times and to respond to any queries the parents or guardians voiced.

Staff engaged with the children in activities and conversations taking opportunities to listen actively to the children as they communicated their ideas and needs. The staff used these opportunities to promote the children's confidence to speak and to develop the children's communication and social skills.

The children demonstrated a comfortable familiarity with the staff caring for them in their rooms and in the service overall. The inspectors often observed children going to staff for hugs and cuddles throughout the inspection, sitting with staff laughing and chatting, or stopping for chats with the other staff members in the service as they transitioned between indoors and outdoors.

Children were supported at times of conflict with staff listening to the children, respecting their feelings and supporting them to understand resolve minor conflicts with their friends. Positive behaviours observed by staff, such as sharing or taking turns were reinforced with recognition and praise for the positive action.

Staff were well informed regarding the service’s policy on behaviour management and management of specific behaviours such as tantrums and biting, which was reflected in their care practices on the day of inspection.

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 secured at the main entrance, by a keypad and call bell system. Staff at reception could clearly see any persons approaching the service through the glass doors and windows before authorising entry to the service. This assisted in preventing any unauthorised persons from entering the premises and to ensure that no child left the service unsupervised. The entrance to the outdoor play area from the car park was secured with a metal frame and adult height wooden locked gate.

Windows were secured with safety devices to prevent any child climbing out a window.

A daily record in writing was maintained of any authorised persons, other than children attending the service, staff or parents, who entered the building.

The inspectors observed that daily assessment checklists were recorded for both the indoor and outdoor physical environments to identify and mitigate against any potential safety risks to the children. Staff were well informed of the procedure to follow in the event of an accident or incident and the required documentation of events that was required in line with the service’s accident and incident policy.

Cleaning schedules for each classroom were maintained and observed to be recorded in line with the tasks carried out of the day of inspection.

Cleaning materials and equipment were safely stored away from the children in a designated storage area.

Infection Control:

Hand washing was observed to be carried out by both staff and the children, prior to snack times, after using tissues to blow noses, toileting, nappy changing, after messy and outdoor play.

Toileting and nappy changing were supported and carried out in line with both the toileting and nappy changing policies contained in the service's infection control policy.

The staff were observed to prompt any child that was forgetful in washing their hands and were observed to also ensure that toddlers had their hands washed or wiped clean after nappy changing procedures.

After mealtimes staff ensured that children had their faces cleaned with wet wipes or encouraged the children to wipe around their mouths with damp paper towelling.

Cleaning schedules were displayed in each classroom and indicated that these were recorded daily by the staff present, as tasks were completed.

The service had an adequate infection control policy in place. A separate handwashing, nappy changing policy and toileting policy were attached as part of the service's Infection Control policy.

Administration of Medication:

Staff were well informed of procedures on administration of anti-febrile or any prescribed medication, in line with the service's policy on administration of medication.

On review of a sample of four administration of medication records, details had been recorded specifically in line with the administration of medication policy in the service.

Safe Sleep:

There was a designated sleep room in the premises for children to sleep during their attendance in the service. Eight standard cots were provided, which were designated to individual children who required naps during their time spent in the service. The temperature of the sleep room was recorded as 19°C on two occasions at 11:00 hours and at 14:45 hours. A room thermometer was in operation to ensure that the room temperature was maintained between 16- 20°C.

Staff recorded the temperature of the sleep room each time that they carried out the sleeping children's physical checks, colour, position and breathing every 10 minutes, recording the findings on individual children's sleep records, in line with the service's safe sleep policy.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The inspector observed several overhanging thorny briar branches, on which a child may catch and injure themselves, in the back corner of the outdoor play area, next to the insect hotel.

- Garda vetting was available for 14 staff members, however, 1 of the 14 vetting disclosures available was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting.

Infection Control:

- The inspectors observed three rubbish bins that were not pedal operated and had lids that had to be lifted to place rubbish inside. These were in the following areas- senior Montessori room, children's toilets and staff toilet. The handling of the lids increased the potential risk of spreading infection in the service.
- There was a straight tear observed in the pink couch in the Senior Toddler room, which exposed the inner foam stuffing. This posed a potential risk of infection as the couch could not be disinfected effectively.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the eight mattresses inspected in the cots were waterproof or had waterproof covers as recommended for safe sleep in line with what the service's safe sleep policy states and with safe sleep and infection control recommendations.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider has submitted the following response,

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The overhanging branches were removed immediately. The owners of the adjoining field and ditch have been contacted to remove the ditch, in order to prevent the risk of any overhanging branches in the future.
- Garda Vetting had been applied for and was returned on the 23rd of January. Service will ensure to re-apply for garda vetting at least 12 weeks before the three-year expiration date to allow for delays in the vetting processes.

Infection Control:

- Bins replaced with pedal bins.
- Couch replaced.

Safe Sleep:

- All mattresses and mattress covers have been replaced.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence of cut briars was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

2. No evidence received.

Infection Control:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence and actions submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. The responses submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

- (2) First Aid boxes were available in each of the children's care rooms, the office and the kitchen. Staff verbally indicated to the inspectors where they were stored.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Two staff members, who had up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training, were not available to the children at all times in case of an emergency. On a review of the staff roster for the week beginning 6 January 2025, there were no First Aid responders available to the children at the following times:
 - Monday from 7.30am to 8am and 5.30pm to 6.30pm
 - Tuesday from 7.30am to 9am and 6pm to 6.30pm
 - Wednesday from 7.30am to 9am and 5pm to 6.30pm
 - Thursday from 7.30am to 8am and 5pm to 6.30pm
 - Friday from 7.30am to 8am and from 5.30pm to 6.30pm

However, it is acknowledged that the registered provider has First Aid Responder training booked for eight staff members for three dates in February 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Rota altered so that there is always a staff member with FAR on the premises. Eight staff members will be certified in FAR by the end January 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Booking for FAR training shown to inspectors on the day of inspection.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. The actions submitted by the registered provider 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

Throughout the inspection the inspectors observed that the required adult to child staff ratios were maintained in each of the four classrooms and in the outdoor play space.

Relief was provided by a surplus staff member and the deputy designated person in charge for staff breaks and on occasions such as nappy changing times, sleep times and movement breaks.

In the classrooms, supervision was always maintained by a staff member if their colleague was in the nappy changing area or supporting a child with toileting. On discussion with staff, staff reported that there was a clear understanding of their roles in the service on safeguarding and supervising the children. The staff were confident in informing the inspector that they were supported by management with any training required or extra support required in ensuring the children's safety in the service.

The inspectors observed that children with additional needs were encouraged in their choice of physically challenging activities, such as climbing, while staff supervised and intercepted gently in a supportive manner, when needed.

The inspectors observed that in each of the classrooms, children's needs and cues of tiredness, hunger or upset were responded to in a timely and nurturing manner.

A daily risk assessment was carried out by the staff of the physical environment, both indoors and outdoors.

Staff were observed to consistently monitor the environment for any potential risk to the children, such as furniture or toys moved to positions that might be unsafe or pose potential trip or fall hazards.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c) In discussion with the registered provider and in conversation with staff in the classrooms, the inspectors observed that staff were well informed of the service's complaints policy and the procedures for managing concerns from parents/guardians, staff or the public, at different stages.

Staff confidently and competently explained that parents were afforded the opportunity to discuss any issues regarding their individual children with the child's key worker in a confidential manner and staff demonstrated the desire to resolve any issues at key worker level or room leader level.

Staff reassured the inspectors that on all occasions of a verbal complaint being received the manager would be informed.

When necessary and on request from parents, complaints may be forwarded for management by the designated person in charge or by the registered provider.

The registered provider informed the inspectors that to the date of inspection, no written complaints had been submitted to the staff or management. Any concerns voiced had been managed in line with the initial process of the service's complaints process, informally at classroom level. Parents are advised and offered to put their concerns or complaints in writing in line with the service's complaints policy.