

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015WD073
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Small Talk Pre-school and Creche
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	27 Boithrin an Mhuilinn, Abbeyside, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
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<b>Eircode:</b>	X35 VR99
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Majella Keogh
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	22/05/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	48	PM	39
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Community Care Centre, HSE Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford City
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	A. Bradshaw
<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

Small Talk is registered as a full day care service, on the outskirts of Dungarvan town. The premises is a purpose-built childcare facility in a residential area. There are three care rooms: the Wobbler room, the Toddler room and the Junior Preschool room. The senior pre-school room called 'Big Talk' is in a separate building adjacent to the main building and operates under the same registration for the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). There is direct access to outdoor play areas from both buildings, and the main building has a dedicated sleep room and a kitchen. The age range of children catered for is 1 to 5 years of age. The opening hours are from 08:00 to 05:30 Monday to Friday for 50 weeks a year.

The service also offers school-age care.

### Staffing

The registered provider is one of the three owners who work directly in the business. The service currently employs 19 care staff and 2 additional auxiliary staff. All the care staff hold major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 and above.

### 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: -

Regulation 9: Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11: Staffing Levels

Regulation 15: Record of a Pre-school Child

Regulation 16: Record in relation to a Pre-school Service

Regulation 17: Information for Parents

Regulation 21: Equipment and Materials

Regulation 23: Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

Regulation 25: First Aid

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under:

- Regulation 9 Management and recruitment (1)(b)
- Regulation 15 Record of a Pre-school Child (1)
- Regulation 16 Record in relation to pre-school service (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis; and (k) details of any accident, injury, incident involving a pre-school child attending the service

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 children, the registered provider, the person in charge, and the staff 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 named person in charge and a deputy available to deputise as required.
  - (b) The person in charge and the deputy were present on the premises on the day of the inspection. Further review of the rosters for 4 weeks (21 April 2025 to 12 May 2025) confirmed that a person in charge and a deputy was present on the premises.
  - (c) The inspector observed that a clear management structure was in place in the service. The owners of the service were available, and there were also room leaders assigned to each room.

(2) The inspector reviewed all 21 staff files, and the following was noted:

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the 21 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) On review of records available, the required six police vetting was available for staff who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, were available.

(4)  
There was evidence that the 19 staff working directly with the children had attained 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.

## Non-Compliance Information

(2)  
(a)(b) While it is acknowledged that the registered provider demonstrated that they had considered two references for employees, as there was evidence of 22 validated references from past employers and 15 validated references from sources other than past employers, 5 validated references were outstanding.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted evidence of the required validated references. The registered provider stated that, in future, a member of the management team will check all references and complete written verbal reference check form.

### Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the references, the staff recruitment and supervision policy and the check list for a new staff member was submitted as evidence.

## Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified on 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of staff were working with the children on day of inspection.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during inspection. Twelve staff were working directly with 48 children in the morning, and 11 staff were working directly with 39 children in the afternoon. The person in charge and one staff member were observed providing relief cover where required, and staff cover for breaks was noted to be included on the staff rosters.

### 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.*

### Compliance Information

The inspector reviewed a sample of 10 children's record forms. Details required from (a) to (i) were included in the sample reviewed.

## 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*

### Compliance Information

The information required in this regulation was available to the inspector. Details referred to from (a) to (i) were included in the service policies, the parental handbook and the tablet application the service used. A sample of 10 medication forms and ten accident and incident forms were reviewed and found to be completed as required and in line with the service's policies.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 17 – Information for parents

*A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).*

#### Compliance Information

The service parental handbook includes the following information: the age group cared for, the adult-to-child ratio, the programme offered to the children and the facilities available. Staff details, the opening hours and fees were displayed on the service notice boards. A copy of the service policies was available in the hallway of the service.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The Pre-school room had areas of interest which offered children the opportunity to access the play equipment and materials independently. The area was equipped with accessories including a large dolls house, furniture and figures, a construction area with blocks, magnetic shapes, a garage with trucks and cars and a tool bench with play tools. There was a large, comfortable couch for the children to relax away from the main play area. There was a low double sink for water play and a sand table. These rooms had tables and chairs which were suitable for the age and stage of the children accessing them.

The outdoor areas had a variety of equipment and toys. The outdoor area at the rear of the main building had an artificial surface and rubber matting. There was a low outdoor sink to refill water bottles. The area had a hilly surface with a tunnel for crawling in and climbing over. There was a playhouse, a covered sandpit, and a climbing frame with a slide. The covered area created shade and allowed for play in wet or sunny weather. There were buddy benches for children to sit and talk with their friends. In addition, there were wheeled toys and balls for the children.

#### Non-Compliance Information

There was a limited amount of play equipment for the children in the Wobbler room, Toddler room and the Junior Preschool room to offer children different play experiences. For example:

- There was a limited number of books available in the Wobbler and Toddlers rooms. The books were stored in a pile on a high shelf in the Wobbler room, with 15 books available to the 15 toddlers their room.
- The play kitchen in the Wobbler room had no accessories to allow for imaginative play.
- The sorting toys in the Wobbler room had no shapes to sort as part of the activity.
- There was a limited number of toys for the toddlers for open-ended play. There was one plastic container in the Wobbler room with a mixture of an assortment of toys, for example, a few blocks, a few plastic animals, and small plastic balls.
- The shelving units in the Junior Pre-school were sparsely equipped with play materials for the children.
- The Toddler room had no low shelving for toys or play equipment. There were three baskets with a mixture of plastic toys with no theme or common play outcomes, for example, plastic blocks, plastic figures, plastic animals, and dolls.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that they have added equipment and toys to the children's care rooms. They stated that there would be an ongoing review of the books and play equipment available to the children. This is to be discussed at the next staff meeting in August 2025. Staff will be advised to use the Aistear/ Siolta Practice guides to support the play equipment and environments. Staff will participate in ongoing training.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence, confirmation of booked training, certificate of training attended, and minutes of a staff meeting were submitted as evidence.

### Summary Comment

The actions and plan submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection and will be reviewed on the next 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:

- On arrival, the entrance was secured to prevent unauthorised entrance or exit from the building.
- Staff were observed to apply sun cream to children throughout the day. Each child had their individual labelled cream or spray.
- Children's emergency contact numbers were stored in each room.

##### Infection Control:

- There was individually labelled storage for the children's toiletries within the nappy changing areas.
- Refrigerated storage facilities were available for the storage of perishable food.
- Daily records of the temperature of the fridges were stored in the digital application the service used.

##### Safe Sleep:

- Sleep logs were maintained at regular intervals, these included the room temperature, the children's breathing, and colour.
- Standard cots and low-level beds were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's ages and developmental needs.
- The temperature of the rooms where children slept was maintained at the required temperature ranges.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. All the children move between both buildings to access the outdoor areas. In discussion with staff, there was no assessment of risk or written safety procedures in place to minimise the probability of children accessing the car park or road.
2. The doors of the cupboards under the fridge in the Wobbler room and under the sink in the Senior pre-school room were not flush and created a risk of pinching.
3. There was a damaged socket in the Toddler room, creating a risk of electrical faults.

##### Infection Control:

4. The children's snacks in the Wobbler rooms were prepared on the changing mat, creating a risk of cross-infection.

5. Some of the furniture and windowsills were worn and were not wipeable, which created a risk of cross-infection.
6. The Wobbler nappy changing unit was in the care room, creating a risk of cross-infection. Nappy-changing areas are required to be separate from occupied rooms.
7. The nappy changing procedure was not followed, creating a risk of cross-infection. The inspector observed three nappy changes where a staff member did not remove gloves used when changing the child's nappy and before cleaning the child's face with a wipe. This contravened the services' nappy changing policy.
8. The purple couch in the Wobbler room was torn and had foam protruding, which prevented effective cleaning practices and posed a risk to infection control.

### Safe Sleep:

9. Sleep mats in the Toddler room were not 50cm apart and created a risk of cross-infection. This was not in line with the service's sleep policy.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that they have now implemented the actions from the risk assessment. All staff have been requested to highlight any areas where they have concerns and going forward, the risk assessment be updated and maintained.
2. The registered provider stated that the lock will be replaced in the Wobbler room and a new door fitted in the Senior pre-school room. These will be monitored as part of the ongoing health and safety review.
3. The registered provider stated that a cover will be placed on the damaged socket, which will be monitored as part of the ongoing health and safety review.

#### Infection Control:

4. The registered provider stated that the changing unit will be moved to a different location in the building and a shelf area beside the fridge has been made available for food preparation.
5. The registered provider stated that the tables and chairs will be replaced and the area which need a touch-up of paint are scheduled for when other remedial work is completed. This will enable the registered provider to ensure cleaning is more effective.

6. The registered provider submitted the plan to move the nappy changing unit from the Wobbler room to the main sanitary area. This work will be completed by September 2025. The registered provider outlined the short-term plan while the works are being carried out.
7. The registered provider stated that all staff have been trained in the nappy changing procedure.
8. The registered provider has stated the torn couch has been removed and a temporary rest area of cushions has been set up until the review of the classrooms is complete.

### Safe Sleep:

9. The registered provider stated that the sleep mats will be placed 50cm apart, and if necessary, they will use the Toddler room for additional space.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. A copy of the risk assessment and the health and safety statement was submitted.
2. A quote for the remedial work was submitted.
3. Photographic evidence was submitted.

#### Infection Control:

4. A quote for the remedial works and photographic evidence was submitted.
5. A copy of an invoice was submitted as evidence.
6. The quote for the remedial works, a copy of an email from the environmental officer and a receipt for sanitary ware were submitted as evidence.
7. A copy of the training record was submitted.
8. Photographic evidence was submitted.

### Safe Sleep:

9. A copy of a memo to staff was submitted as evidence.

### Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has partially addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection and will be reviewed on the 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

(1) The registered provider has ensured that a person trained in first aid was available to the children at all times. Twelve staff members were trained to the first aid responder standard.

(2) A suitably equipped first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the hallway of the building.