

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH007			
Name of Service:	Laughs & Giggles Childcare			
Address of Service:	Riverside Community Centre, Dalton Park, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath			
Eircode:	N91 V5NP			
Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Dollard			
Service type:	Full Day			
Date of Inspection:	08/08/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	12
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.			
Inspection undertaken by:	C.O' Connor Hughes & K. Murphy			
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.			

Description of service

This community service operates as a full day care service and accommodates children from 1 to 6 years of age.

The service is open from 08:45 to 18:00 Monday to Friday.

The Early Years' Service is located in a purpose-built single storey Community Centre. The service consists of four pre-school rooms, namely the wobbler room, the toddler room and pre-school rooms 1 and 2. Pre-school room 2 was closed for the summer period. A school aged childcare room, a sleep room, a kitchen, a staff room, an office and reception area were available. An outdoor play area is located at the back of the service. On-site parking and set down facilities are available. The service is based in a residential area in the town of Mullingar, Co.

Westmeath.

Staffing

Nineteen adults work in this full day care service. The designated persons in charge and thirteen adults were working directly with children on the 8 August 2025. Two adults are employed under the community employment scheme. A cook is employed in the service. The registered provider does not work with children. The designated persons in charge attended the closing meeting.

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.

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 persons 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*

(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)

The persons in charge and deputy person in charge were available in the service.

(b)

The persons in charge were present for the duration of the inspection.

Nineteen staff files were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available for nineteen staff from past employers and from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the nineteen staff files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was exceeded during the inspection.

(2)

There were thirty-six pre-school children and twelve school age children attending the service supervised directly by thirteen adults in the morning.

Twelve pre-school children and twelve school age children were present in the afternoon supervised by eight adults.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises during the hours of operation.

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:

- (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

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

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-

- (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)(b)

Wobbler room, Toddler room and Pre-school room 1

The care practices implemented to support the children’s daily routine met the needs of the children attending the service. The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Staff were observed to give comfort, hugs and reassurance to children settling into the service. A phased in basis for children ‘settling in’ was in place in the wobbler room in line with the service’s settling in policy. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, toileting and mealtimes. Staff used a calm approach giving positive praise and encouragement to children. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

Children who went to the toilet independently were supervised by a staff member. Nappy changing was carried out regularly and as needed. Children who required nappy changing were provided with notice from the staff member. Staff were observed to communicate, sing and interact positively with the child during nappy changing. The nappy changing practice observed was carried out in line with the displayed service procedure. Children were observed to wash their hands prior to snacks and meals. Staff supported children at mealtimes as they encouraged conversations, singing and interactions with the children. Children were encouraged to feed themselves and staff assisted the children as required.

Younger children in the wobbler room enjoyed free play, story time, singing songs with actions. Children enjoyed freedom of movement as they played and explored the play areas and age-appropriate materials accessible to them supported by staff. Children in the wobbler room were excited to see and happily enjoyed the attention of the older children in the outdoor play area who waved to them at the wobbler room window.

Older children were observed to move between the indoor and outdoor play areas enjoying physical play and gross motor activities. Indoor play activities observed included free play, construction, tabletop and creative activities.

A daily logbook was completed by staff detailing an account of each child's day which supported the communication between the service and the parents of the children. A verbal handover was given to parents on collection.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, sensory play and home corners.

(b)

A separate sleep room equipped with four cots was located adjacent to the wobbler room. Rest areas were provided in the pre-school rooms.

(3)(a)

Segregated outdoor play areas were available for children and accessible from the pre-school rooms.

The toys and equipment included slides, toy kitchen, a tunnel, trikes and bikes, benches, tables and chairs.

A separate play area with an all-weather absorbent surface was located outside the wobbler and toddler rooms.

A large tarmac surface area was available for children to cycle their bikes and trikes. The perimeter was secured by a high-level wall.

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

Meals and snacks are prepared fresh on site by the cook. The daily menu plan reflected the provision of the food for breakfast, morning snack, dinner and evening snack. The menu plan demonstrated that all dietary needs were catered for in the service. Water and milk were offered to children.

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 entrance to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. A buzzer and intercom system were in place for access to the service for parents and visitors. The inspectors signed the visitor book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. A cleaning schedule was available for the service. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet.

A refrigerator was available in the pre-school rooms for the storage of perishable food stuffs.

The pre-school rooms were ventilated by natural ventilation with windows open. The water temperature recorded at wash hand basins was approximately 38.2 degrees Celsius.

The sanitary accommodation and nappy changing areas were ventilated by natural or mechanical ventilation. Supplies of paper hand towel and liquid soap were available in all sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in the service. Correct procedures were in place for the administration of medication.

Safe Sleep:

Sleep logs were in place to record the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children. The occupied room temperature was maintained at 20 degrees Celsius. Air conditioning was available if required in the sleep room.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed and fire assembly points were located to the front of the premises.

Outing:

The outing policy and risk assessment documentation was reviewed in respect of the annual outing from the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a nominated staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) has to be approved by a staff member.

(b)

A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service.

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)
Three adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and were available on the premises during the hours of operation on a rostered basis.

(2)(a)
A fully equipped first aid box was readily available in each pre-school room.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the children in the pre-school service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
- (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)
A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 25 June 2025. The service was closed for annual holidays in the month of July.

(b)
A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 17 January 2025 and 9 June 2025 respectively.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were supervised by staff members during play activities both indoors and outdoors during the inspection. Staff members supervised the children's use of the toilet and handwashing.

Upon collection staff met and handed the child to their parents at the entrance to the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.

Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may reasonably require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.

Compliance Information

The persons in charge furnished all information as required for the inspection.