

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH016		
Name of Service:	Mellowes Childcare		
Address of Service:	Moygrehan, Athboy, Co. Westmeath		
Eircode:	C15 W288		
Name of Registered Provider:	Deborah McGuinness		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	23/06/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	67	PM 66
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 full day care service is registered to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years and operates from 08:00 to 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis.

The Early Years' Service is located in a two-storey purpose-built premises. Six pre-school rooms accommodate the children in the service. The wobbler room, toddler room 1, toddler room 2, ECCE red room, cinema, staff room and office are located on the ground floor. Three ECCE rooms namely the yellow room, green room and ECCE room 2 and the kitchen are located on the first floor of the service.

A large outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the premises. An adventure centre is co-located adjacent to the outdoor play area. On-site parking and set down areas are located to the side of the premises.

The service is located on the outskirts of the town of Athboy, County Westmeath.

Staffing

There are twenty-four adults employed in the service. The registered provider and thirteen childcare staff were present and working directly with the children on the 23 June 2025. The designated person in charge was present and works as an administrator in the service. A part time cook was present. A relief staff member came to work in the service at 14:00 to 17:30.

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.

Regulation 9- Management and recruitment - (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) (4)

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (2) (8)(a)

Regulation 16- Record in relation to a pre-school service (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j)(k)

Regulation 19- Health, welfare and development of child - (1)(b)

Regulation 20 Facilities for rest and play (1)(a)(3)(a)

Regulation 22- Food and drink

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25- First aid - (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26 -Fire safety measures - (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation

Regulation 19 (1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of child

Regulation 20 Facilities for Rest and Play

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

Regulation 27 Supervision

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the wobbler room, toddler room 1, toddler room 2 and the ECCE red room.

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 registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major

award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

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

(b)

The registered provider and designated person in charge were present for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

Clear management structures were in place and displayed in the corridor of the service.

Twenty-four files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available for twenty-four adults from past employers and from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the twenty-four 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 seven adults who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Adults 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 or a qualification deemed to be equivalent.

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 maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were 67 children attending the service supervised directly by fourteen adults in the morning.

There were 66 children attending the service supervised directly by thirteen adults in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

The staff roster reviewed 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:

- (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;*
- (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) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j)(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 1, Toddler room 2 and ECCE red room.

The care practices observed met the needs of the children attending the service. Staff were supportive of younger children learning to toilet train. Staff were observed to regularly remind the children to use the toilet in the toddler rooms. Children had their nappies changed on a regular basis and as required. Children wore bibs to protect their clothes at mealtimes. Personal care needs were attended to in a caring manner. Spare clothes were available for each child if needed. Children were encouraged to be independent and to feed themselves. Staff sat with children and assisted them as needed during mealtimes. Age-appropriate plates, dishes and cutlery were used by children at snack and mealtimes. Younger children slept in a restful atmosphere in the sleep rooms. Older children slept on low level beds in toddler rooms one and two. A staff member observed sleeping children.

The staff held the children in positive regard and were familiar with their personalities and daily routine which helped to promote the emotional security of children attending the service. Individual care plans were in place for children in the wobbler room. Good communication was observed between staff and children as the staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, nappy changing, toileting and mealtimes. Minor behaviour issues were handled in a positive caring manner by staff.

The child's daily routine including feeding, nappy changing and sleep patterns in the wobbler room is shared with parents via an electronic handheld tablet by the staff. Monthly newsletters are sent to parents with information and updates from the staff in the various pre-school rooms. The child's learning journal depicting the child's play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

Children enjoyed the freedom of movement to the outdoor play environment and played happily in the multiple play experiences in the outdoor play area supported by staff. Small group work was observed in the toddler rooms

and ECCE red room as the staff sat with and supported a small number of children at their various play activities. Younger children enjoyed story time and crawling and exploring their environment in the wobbler room.

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 19 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, dress up, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

Soft furnishings provided the rest areas in the pre-school rooms. Low level beds were available for children over the age of two who required sleep. Two separate sleep rooms were attached to the wobbler and toddler room 2 and equipped with ten cots.

(3)(a)

The outdoor area was accessed directly from the service. The perimeter was secured by a wooden fence, wire fence, trees, foliage and key coded metal gates. The surfaces noted consisted of a combination of wood chip, natural grass and fine gravel stone. The outdoor play areas were separated into areas for older and younger children. A variety of toys and play equipment for use by the children was available. Interest areas included a sand room, a soft playroom, a dance/ disco room, climbing units with slides, climbing walls, swing sets and wooden structures including a shop, a ship and post office.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

A 50 cm space was not in place between two cots in the toddler sleep room.

This non-compliance was noted on the last inspection on the 17 September 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Management have been in contact with our carpenter and he informed us that he will schedule the works to change around the door frame and re hang the door to open the opposite way into the room to allow for 50 cm space for each cot in the sleep room.

This work should be done in the next two months.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence to carpenter.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

A four-week menu was available in the service. The full day care provides the main meal of the day for the children in attendance. The morning and afternoon snacks are provided by the parents.

At 10:45 approximately children enjoyed a healthy snack of sandwiches, a selection of fruit and yoghurt.

The main meal was prepared fresh on site by the cook and consisted of minced beef, potatoes and mixed vegetables with water and milk to drink.

Refrigerators were available for the storage of perishable goods. Temperature records were recorded daily and available for review.

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. Access is gained through a bell and coded system at the main entrance door. The inspectors signed the visitors 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. A self-closing gate was put in place to safeguard children accessing the car park area since the last inspection on the 17 September 2024.

Infection Control:

The nappy changing procedure was carried out correctly in line with the services' nappy changing procedure displayed. The premises was visually clean. Toys and equipment were easily cleanable. The wash hand basins were plumbed with an instantaneous supply of hot and cold water. The temperature of the water at wash hand basins was recorded at approximately 33 degrees Celsius. The sanitary accommodation was stocked with a sufficient supply of liquid soap and paper hand towels. Pedal bins were in place in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste materials. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Soothers were stored correctly in individual containers.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service. The medication forms indicated that correct procedures were in place for the administration of medication to children attending the service.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted on a sleep log for children attending the toddler rooms. Sleep checks were recorded on an electronic record system for the children attending the wobbler room and shared with parents. Staff sat and observed sleeping children in the sleep room. A wall thermometer was noted in the wobbler and toddler sleep rooms.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed on the ground floor in the service and a fire assembly point was in place in the outdoor area.

Outing:

The registered provider confirmed that outings are not undertaken by 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 on the ground and first floors.

(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 fire fighting 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 17 June 2025.

(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 smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in September 2024.

(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 under adult supervision when playing in the indoor and outdoor environments during the inspection. Adults supervised children when using the toilet. Adults were observed to hand over the child to the parent at collection time.

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.