

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

xTUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH017
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Name of Service:	Waddlers and Toddlers
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Address of Service:	Winetown South, Rathowen, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N91 AH01
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Anderson
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	34
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
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Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan and F. Maher.
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Waddlers and Toddlers is registered as a full day care service for children aged between 0 to 6 years. The service operates between the hours of 8:00 am - 18:00 hours on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is operated by an independent provider. The Early Years' Service is located in a single storey adapted residential premises. Three pre-school rooms, a sleep room, a kitchen and an office are provided in the main building. A general-purpose cabin is located in the rear of the premises. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. On site parking and set down facilities are provided.

The service is located in a rural setting on the outskirts of the village of Rathowen, County Westmeath.

Staffing

Eleven adults are employed in the service. On the day of inspection the registered provider, deputy person in charge and eight other adults were present and working directly with the children.

All staff members working directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under.

- Regulation 9 (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

however, on inspection additional non-compliances were identified under:

- Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials.

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

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

(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

- (2)
- (a)(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were available in respect of 11 adults employed whose staff files were reviewed.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months whose records were reviewed.
- (4) Eleven adults employed to work directly with children attending the service and held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher or a recognised equivalent qualification 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) There were forty-four children attending the service being supervised directly by eight adults.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.
- (8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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.

Non-Compliance Information

- The chairs and tables in Toddler/Junior Preschool room were not the correct fit for each other as the chairs were too low and the tables were too high.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Four new tables have been bought the junior preschool room.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph.

Summary Comment

The written response and photographic evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 21.

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 door to the service was secured and managed by the staff to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Staff members in each care room advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if observed that a child may be wearing them.

The staff members were aware of the potential choking risks that full grapes posed when asked by the inspectors. There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed and reviewed by the registered provider to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication in the service including recording of same. Medicine was safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

There was one sleep room with five cots available for children less than 2 years of age; twenty-one low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. The staff members in the Baby/ Wobbler room were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and the required care of sleeping children including sleep room environmental temperatures and the 10-minute sleep check observations for all sleeping children which was recorded in the sleep log.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out, and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed. Fire assembly signage was observed at the front of the service.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that service does not conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. It was observed there was potential for unauthorised access to the rear of the premises on one side of the building, leading to the play areas as the the high-level perimeter fence ended and there was a low-level gate, easily opened from the outside in place.
2. At 12:05pm and 12:17pm, the inspector noted as staff left via the back door of the service for lunch break, they failed to secure the door thus leaving the potential for unauthorised access to the premises at those times. The inspector secured the door on both occasions and brought it to the attention of the registered provider.

Safe Sleep:

3. Ten-minute sleep observations were not recorded for sleeping children in Toddler / Junior Preschool which was not consistent with the sleep policy for the service and not appropriate practice to ensure the safety of the children while asleep. It is acknowledged that staff members remained with the children during the sleep period.
4. Three children aged under 24 months were observed to be sleeping on low beds rather than floor beds in the Baby/Wobbler room. This did not align with the 'Early Years Inspectorate Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months' requirement.
5. Four sleep plans were available for children aged under 24 months who were assessed as not been suitable to sleep in a cot.

The four sleep plan records were assessed to be incomplete as evidenced by the following observations:

- One plan did not have a parental signature, the staff members signature and the date that the plan was completed.
 - There was no staff signature or date completed on a second document.
 - The date and role of the staff member was not completed, and the date of the parental signature was missing on another plan.
 - The role of the staff member completing a plan and date was not completed on another document.
6. There were no blankets provided for the sleeping children on low level beds in Baby / Wobbler and Toddler / Junior Playschool rooms.
7. In the Toddler / Junior Playschool room, the children's shoes were not removed for sleep.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The high-level perimeter fence has been extended and a gate fitted.
2. The back door is now only used as a fire exit, and all staff must use the front door for entry and exit. An updated daily outdoor risk assessment has been created.

Safe Sleep:

3. Ten-minute sleep observations are now taking place for all toddler junior preschool children. A daily sleep check folder has been implemented, and the manager will check weekly.
4. Low floor beds have been bought for the children transitioning from the cot to beds. When children transition from cots to floor beds we will ensure there is readily available floor beds for them.
5. The deputy manager will sign off on all sleep plans to ensure they are fully completed. Staff updated on procedure on completing the sleep plan and manager will sign off on completed plan.
6. Extra cellular blankets were purchased, and all children now have a sheet and blanket for sleep.
7. Staff updated on the policy for sleep to ensure shoes are removed. A set of spare blankets have been purchased.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photograph.

2. Photograph of sign in place on the door.

Safe Sleep:

3. Sleep record.
4. Invoice and photographs.
5. Document.
6. Photographs.
7. Documents.

Summary Comment

The written response, documentary and photographic evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23.

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.*
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.*
- (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.*
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a), (b) The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained. The inspector's visit to the service was documented in the visitor's book on arrival.
- (4) The registered provider confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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) Four staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the main office.
- (b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the 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 was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 13 January 2026.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm were last serviced on 14 January 2026 and 11 September 2025 respectively.
 - (4) Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed 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 observed being supervised at all times in the Baby / Wobbler and Senior rooms throughout the inspection by the staff caring for them, in the in the sanitary areas and during the various transitions throughout the day.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The supervision of the children attending the Toddler / Junior Playschool room was compromised during the transition at lunch time to sleep which was rushed as evidenced by the following observations:
 - The room was being transitioned for sleep at 12:15 hours as blinds in the room were pulled and the lighting was dull as two of the four lights were working. Ten low beds were observed to be placed on the floor ready for the children who needed sleep.
 - At 12:19 hours, three children were observed to be sitting at the table finishing their lunch while some children who had finished were lying on low beds and other children were being toileted with a staff

member attending to their needs outside the care room. The two staff members were tidying up and bringing cups and plates to the sink however during this time their backs were to the children; a staff member then started to clean the tables prompting the children to finish their lunch.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Revised sleep time.

Staff meeting was held with care room staff members.

The lights were fixed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Staff meeting minutes.

Invoice for lights and photographs of installed lights.

Summary Comment

The written response, documentary and photographic evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 27. This area of practice will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 was noted to be 27 March 2026.