

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH030			
Name of Service:	Mullingar Academy of Childcare & Education			
Address of Service:	105 Ballinderry Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath			
Eircode:	N91 P862			
Name of Registered Provider:	Kathleen Egan			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	07/11/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	33
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath.			
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy			
Title:	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).				
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.			

Description of service

The age range of children that the service is registered to accommodate is 0 to 6 years of age. The full day care service operates between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is operated by an independent provider.

The Early Years' Service is located in an adapted two storey residential building. One pre-school room is located on the first floor and two pre-school rooms are located on the ground floor. A sleep room, a kitchen and an office are provided. Two small outdoor play areas attached to pre-school rooms are located to the front of the service. A large outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. Additional sanitary accommodation, nappy changing facilities and a staff room are located in a standalone building to the rear of the service in the outdoor area. Onsite parking and set down facilities are provided. The service is in an urban setting in a residential area in the town of Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Staffing

Thirteen adults work in the service including the registered provider. Eight childcare practitioners were present and working directly with children on 7 November 2025. Two students and a staff member who engaged in environmental cleaning and support duties as determined by the person in charge were present. The registered provider was present for part of the inspection but was unable to be present for the duration of the inspection.

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:

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

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (3) (8)(a)

Regulation 15- Record of a pre-school child – (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i)

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

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play -- (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking In and Out and record of Attendance

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

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

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 33 – Furnishing of Information to Agency

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 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

(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 a person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

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

Fifteen files including the file of the registered provider and two students were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available in respect of the files reviewed from past employers or from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the fifteen files reviewed.

In respect of fourteen of the fifteen files reviewed the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in respect of one of the fifteen files reviewed. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

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

(4)

Staff 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 maintained during the inspection.
- (2)
There were thirty-five children attending the service in the morning supervised directly by eight staff members including the person in charge. There were thirty-three children attending the service in the afternoon supervised directly by seven staff members including the person in charge.
- (8)(a)
The staff roster and attendance records reviewed indicated that at least two adults are present throughout the opening hours of the service.

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

(1)

In a sample review of twelve child records for children enrolled to attend the service the details relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) were in place.

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)

The main meal was prepared fresh by a nominated staff member. A roll over menu provided information relating to the main meal to be provided on each day of the week. The main meal consisted of a fish pie. Water and milk were offered to the children. Snacks for each child were provided by the parents. Children enjoyed the selection of food provided.

Older children went to the toilet independently and were assisted where necessary. Staff reminded children to wash their hands after using the toilet. For the younger children regular nappy changes were carried out on a scheduled and individual needs basis.

Younger children slept in a restful atmosphere in the sleep room and were physically checked every ten minutes by a staff member.

Good teamwork was observed amongst staff. Positive interactions were observed between staff and children. Eye contact was maintained; soft language tones were used and positive praise given to children on the completion of activities.

Staff were familiar with children and their personalities. Staff worked in partnership with parents. For the younger children a daily report sheet was used to record information relating to the child's day and included information relation to eating, sleeping, drinks and nappy changes. A verbal handover to parents was observed at collection time.

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 and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

A separate sleep room equipped with three cots was located adjacent to the playroom. Low level beds were available in the service for any child over the age of two years who required rest or sleep. Soft furnishings were in place to support rest and relaxation.

(3)(a)

Two small outdoor play areas were attached to the front of the baby room and the playroom which allowed for extended play to the outdoors. Both play areas were secured by perimeter fencing.

A large outdoor play area was attached to the rear of the service. The outdoor area was secured by a wall, fence, trees and shrubs. A sheltered area was in place to support year-round outdoor play. A large artificial grass area and a small discovery garden with trees and shrubs was in place. The outdoor area was equipped with a variety of bikes, trikes, and climb/slide units.

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 main entrance door to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. 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:

Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. All toys and materials were easily cleanable.

Warm running water, liquid soap and hand towel dispensers were available in the sanitary accommodation.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school rooms and in the associated sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Openable windows and mechanical ventilation were provided in the sanitary accommodation.

A refrigerator was available for the storage of non-perishable goods in the service. Refrigerator temperatures were recorded daily and maintained within the required limit. Soothers for use by children were individually labelled.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered during the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in a sleep log. Sleeping babies were physically checked every ten minutes by a staff member.

Fire Safety:

A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the service.

Outing:

The designated person in charge stated that outings were not conducted on a regular basis from the service. A completed risk assessment was available for review in respect of an outing conducted earlier in the year.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The most recent Garda vetting disclosure presented in respect of one of the staff members was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider stated in the response that immediately upon identification the Garda vetting was applied for returned and reviewed. The registered provider will at the end of each month check staff files to ensure all staff vetting forms are in date. (Garda Vetting Disclosure included).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

(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 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.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of 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)

The registered provider, designated person in charge and three other staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises on a rostered basis during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

A fully equipped first aid box were readily available in the service.

(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 29 October 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and

smoke alarms on the premises. The smoke alarms and the firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced in August and September 2025 respectively.

(4)
A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in conspicuous positions throughout 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 and the expiry date noted as 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 registered provider and the designated person in charge provided all information and records required during the inspection.