

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015WH071

Name of Service: Busy Little Bees

Address of Service: Community Hall, Castletown Geoghegan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

Eircode:

Name of Registered Provider: Annie Carroll, Caroline Maloney

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 25/06/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	Not applicable
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----------------

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	A Spain
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

Busy Little Bees is a sessional preschool service currently in operation from a community hall in Castletown Geoghegan, Co. Westmeath. The service is operational between the hours of 8.45 and 11.45am daily and cares for children in the age range 2 to 6 years. Rooms in use in the service include the community hall, a play area off the kitchen and sanitary accommodation off the hall for children and staff. An outdoor play area is available at the back of the premises. The rooms available are open to community use after the service's operational hours. The registered providers have applied to register in a separate owner/occupied building in Castletown Geoghegan.

Staffing

The service is staffed by both registered providers and one additional staff member. A relief staff member is available as required.

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 and safety. 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 – Records of pre-school child,

Regulation 19 – Health, welfare and development of child,

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,

Regulation 25 – First aid,

Regulation 26 – Fire safety measures,

Regulation 28 – Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Records of pre-school child. The scope of the inspection included both playrooms in use in the service and the outdoor play area.

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 providers, staff member 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

Both the designated person in charge and the named person to deputise were present in the service on the arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure observed on the day of inspection, as each staff member shared responsibility for caring for the needs of the children present.

(2)(a)(b)

Two references from past employers were held on file in respect of one staff member.

A reference from a past employer and a reference from a reputable source were held on file in respect of three staff members.

(c)

A Garda vetting disclosure was held on file in respect of the four staff members 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 for all staff members.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as none of the staff had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as adults.

(3)

Records held on file confirmed that the necessary vetting procedures were conducted prior to the appointment of the staff to work in the service.

(4)

Records held on file confirmed that all staff members held a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at level 6 on the National Quality Framework.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)
An adequate number of adults cared for the children on the day of inspection. The inspector also reviewed the children's attendance records and the staff roster for the week of the 12 May 2025. Records confirmed that the maximum number of children present was 30 children with 3 staff members in attendance.

(3)
Three staff members cared for 28 children on the arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the inspection.

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 six of the children's individual records. The necessary details in respect of (1)(a) to (i) were recorded in respect of the sample of records reviewed.

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-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Children were observed to sit at low level tables and chairs in the company of staff for breaktime in the service. Breaktime was relaxed and children and staff enjoyed leisurely conversations on topics including the upcoming holiday break. Snacks provided from home included sandwiches, pasta, cheese and fresh fruit including apples and bananas. Children finished their lunch at their individual pace while other children moved to play in the home corner and with blocks on the floor in a construction area. Children and staff sang happy birthday to mark a child's birthday in the service. Praise was offered to the children for returning their lunch boxes and drink beakers to their bags after break and for placing wastepaper in the sealed bin in the playroom.

Two staff members cared for a group of 20 children in the main hall while a smaller group of 8 children were taken to the play area off the kitchen and were cared for by the remaining staff member. The atmosphere in the service was relaxed as children engaged in free play with their friends before departure for summer break. Activities the children were observed to enjoy included building with blocks and playing with miniature toys on wheels in the small playroom area. Children in this room also enjoyed sitting at floor level with the staff member to sing songs with motions and clap hands at the end of the songs. Children in the hall enjoyed colouring pictures with crayons, playing with the trucks and cars, and tending to dolls in the home corner. Children were observed to engage in floor exercises with a staff member in the hall. The children also sat in a group setting to listen to the story read to them, view pictures in the story book and answer questions posed by the staff member.

Children cared for in both rooms were observed to engage in outdoor play on the day of 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:

The entrance to the service was secured with a key lock and a doorbell was provided to alert the service and facilitate access. Safety barriers were provided to prevent children from accessing the kitchen area off the small playroom and to deny children access to a fire exit leading to the roadway. A safety checklist was posted on the wall in the hall and completed daily to ensure that the exits were checked and barriers secured prior to the arrival of children to the service. The outdoor play area at the back of the service was safely fenced in by concrete walls and the back wall of the building. A high level timber guard at both gable ends of the outdoor play area guarded against unsupervised exit by children and access to the roadway at the front of the building.

Infection Control:

A Refrigerator was provided in the kitchen for the storage of children's lunches. Children were observed to wash their hands under supervision before break time in the service. Completed room checks were on display in the hall advising of the daily checklist conducted to ensure the rooms were maintained and surfaces cleaned.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered to children on the day of inspection. Parental consent for the administration of temperature reducing medication was documented on the childrens enrolment forms reviewed by the inspector. Temperature reducing medication with an expiry date of February 2026 was held in storage in a high level kitchen press.

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)
Two staff members trained in FAR (first aid responder) with an expiry date of October 2025 were available in the service.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was stored on a high level shelf in the small playroom off the kitchen.

(b) The first aid box was easily accessible and available to staff caring for children in attendance in 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 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)

Records were available to confirm that monthly fire drills were conducted in the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on the 4 June 2025.

(b)

The maintenance record for the fire fighting equipment confirmed that an annual service was conducted in December 2025. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system confirmed that a service was conducted on 17 April 2025.

(4)

The notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was posted on the exit door leading from the passageway off the kitchen to outdoors and in the main hall.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 30 children in daily attendance in a sessional service. Insurance was valid from the 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.