

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH072
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Name of Service:	Jolly Mariner Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Brick Island, Abbey Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 E008
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Name of Registered Provider:	Cyril Dully
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	06/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM	42
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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:	C.O' Connor Hughes
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).

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Description of service

This community service provides a full day care, part time and sessional service. The service is open from 08:30 to 18:00 Monday to Friday. The service is part of a multiple and operated by Athlone Community Services Council (ACSC) CLG. The Early years' service is located to the ground floor of an adapted residential building. The service consists of three pre-school rooms, namely the wobbler/ toddler room, junior pre-school room and the senior pre-school room. A sleep room, an office, a small kitchen and staff room are provided. Outdoor play areas are located at the rear of the service. The service is situated in a residential area in the town of Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Staffing

The registered provider employs fifteen staff members. The designated person in charge and eight staff members were working directly with the children on the 6 May 2026. One adult was employed under the Community Employment scheme. A cleaner and administrator are employed in the service. A student was present on work experience. The registered provider does not work with children.

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)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3)(4)

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1)(2)(4)(8)(a)

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

Regulation 20 – Rest and play facilities

Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials

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)(2)(3)(4)

Regulation 27 - Supervision

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 32- Complaints (1)(2)(3)

Regulation 33- Furnishing Information to the Agency

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation

Regulation 19 (1)(a) -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 toddler room and the junior pre-school 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.

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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 designated 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*

(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

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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 person in charge was available in the service.

(b)

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

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that five new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 1 July 2025. The five staff files and one student file were reviewed and the following was noted.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available from past employers or sources other than previous employers in respect of the new staff members and student.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the new staff members and student.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. An in date garda vetting disclosure was available for the head of childcare services of the ACSC group, a staff member and music contractor which required renewal since the last inspection on the 1 July 2025.

(d)

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

(3)

The registered provider ensured that employees were vetted prior to commencement of employment in the service.

(4)

The new 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 or a letter of eligibility.

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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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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 forty-seven children attending the service supervised directly by eight adults in the morning.

There were forty-two children present in the afternoon supervised by six adults.

(4)(a)(b)

The adult: child ratio was maintained for children attending on a sessional and full day care basis in the service.

(8)(a)

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

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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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Toddler room and Junior pre-school room.

Children enjoyed freedom of movement during various play opportunities in the indoor and outdoor environments moving from one play experience to another supported by the staff. Children from the Junior room availed of extended outdoor play time in the sunshine. Staff applied individual suncream for skin protection for the children outdoors. A water station was noted in the outdoor play area for children to help themselves if they were thirsty. Children in the toddler outdoor play area enjoyed free play and blowing bubbles supported by staff. Children were actively engaged and responded enthusiastically during the magic show in the Junior pre-school room.

Children washed their hands prior to snack and mealtimes. Children were encouraged to be independent and to feed themselves. Staff sat with children and assisted them as needed during mealtimes. Children took their time to enjoy the meal. Bibs were applied to protect children's clothes at mealtimes. Children attending the Toddler room had their nappies changed on a regular basis and as required. Personal care needs were attended by staff. Sleeping children were checked physically by a staff member every ten minutes.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child and their personalities. Staff were observed to give comfort and reassurance to the children. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during mealtimes, play activities and nappy changing. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff. Staff used a calm approach using soft language tones, giving positive praise and encouragement to children when minor behaviour management issues occurred in the Junior pre-school room.

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Upon discussion the person in charge informed the inspector that partnership with parents occurs in the following ways: There is an open-door policy in operation in the service. A verbal handover is given on collection. Children's play activities and updates are communicated through a social media application (SMS). Children's artwork is shared with parents regularly during the pre-school term. The child's learning journal depicting the child's play activities are presented to the parents at the end of the pre-school term.

The indoor environment was bright and colourful. A range of developmentally appropriate, creative and enriching experiences was available for all children. Children's artwork and photographs were noted in the Toddler and Junior pre-school rooms.

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, dress up, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

Soft furnishings provided the rest areas in the Toddler and Junior pre-school rooms. Low level beds were available for children over the age of two who required sleep.

(3)(a)

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The outdoor area was accessed directly from the pre-school rooms. The outdoor play area was safe and secure with the perimeter secured by high walls. An absorbent surface was noted. The outdoor play area was separated into areas for older and younger children. A variety of toys and play equipment for use by the children was available that included slides, a playhouse, tunnels, play bricks, a spaceship, basketball stand, bicycles and tricycles.

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.

Compliance Information

There was a variety of suitable and sufficient play materials and equipment to support children for various forms of creative, manipulative, imaginary and free play in the indoor and outdoor play environments in the service. The tables and chairs were child sized suitable to each child's age and development. Equipment was well maintained, durable and easy to clean. Materials were accessible to children on low level open shelving and drawer units.

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 menu plan was in place depicting the main meals provided to children each day. The service provides the breakfast and the main meal to children attending on a full day care basis. Parents provide the morning snack and afternoon snack for the children attending.

At 13:00 children enjoyed mashed potato, vegetables, chicken and gravy for the main meal provided by the sister service located near the service. Extra helpings of dinner were available for children if required.

Milk and water was offered to children. A water station was located in the outdoor play area for children to serve themselves as required. A refrigerator was available for the storage of perishable foods in the pre-school rooms and in the main kitchen.

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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:

Access to the service is through the main door which is locked and secure and a coded lock system and doorbell are used for entry which ensured no unauthorised access to the service. The Inspector signed the visitors book on arrival. Monthly safety checklists were available for review. 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. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed.

The nappy changing procedure was conducted correctly in line with the service's nappy changing procedure displayed. Nappy changing logs were maintained for younger children attending the service.

Children's individual nappies and creams were stored correctly in the sanitary accommodation.

Ventilation was available through the air to water system in operation in the service. Open windows provide natural ventilation in the pre-school rooms.

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

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely inaccessible to children. Nut free signage was displayed. Health care plans and emergency care plans were available for children requiring medication.

Safe Sleep:

An electronic sleep log noting the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children indicating children were checked every 10 minutes while sleeping was available for review. The environmental temperature recorded was 18 degrees Celsius in the toddler sleep room by the service's own thermometer.

Fire Safety:

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The fire exits were unobstructed in the premises. The fire assembly point is located to the front of the service.

Outing:

The designated person in charge the service did not undertake an outing since the last inspection on the 1 July 2026.

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 adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation.
- (2)(a)
A first aid box was located in the pre-school rooms of the service.
- (b)
A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children 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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*
- (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 10 April 2026.

(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 in October and November 2025.

(2)

Records were open to inspection to (a)(b)(c).

(3)

The registered provider ensured the records were held for a five-year period.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the pre-school rooms and in the main reception of the service.

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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

The layout of the pre-school rooms in the service was appropriate for supervision of children by sight or sound. Staff supervised children in the indoor and outdoor environment and when using the sanitary accommodation during the inspection. Staff were observed to hand over children to their parents when the morning session was finished.

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 the 28 February 2027.

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Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The service's complaints policy was available and reviewed. The relevant details in respect of (a)(b)(c) were noted in the policy.
- (2)(a)(b) Records indicate that the service held information in respect of (a) and (b).
- (3)(a)(b) The records were available for review by the Inspector.

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 designated person in charge furnished the required information to the Early Years Inspectorate.