

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2015WH074 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Irene's Pre-School |
|-------------------------|--------------------|

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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Mullingar FC, Gainstown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath |
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|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| <b>Eircode:</b> | N91 D889 |
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|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Irene Murphy |
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|                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Service type:</b> | Sessional |
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| <b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b> | 11/03/2026 |
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|                                   |    |    |    |     |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 12 | PM | N/A |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|

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|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Tusla Early Years Services<br>Primary Care Centre<br>Church Avenue<br>Tullamore<br>Co. Offaly<br>R35K1W4 |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>                | A Spain                                                                                                  |
| <b>Title:</b>                                   | 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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Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

### Description of service

Irene's Pre-School is a privately run sessional service caring for children in the age range 2 to 6 years. The service is operational between the hours of 9.00am and 12.00pm from a community club building. The service has the sole use of a playroom located at first floor level. Sanitary accommodation for use by children and staff is located in the hallway close to the playroom. An astro turf enclosed outdoor play area is provided at the back of the building. A school age service is provided between the hours of 1.30 and 2.30pm for junior classes from the nearby primary school.

### Staffing

The registered provider and 2 staff members provide direct care to the children attending the service.

### 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 (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4) – Management and recruitment,

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- Regulation 11 (1)(3) – Staffing levels,
- Regulation 15 (1)(a) to (i) – Records of pre-school child,
- Regulation 16(1)(h)(i) – Record in relation to Pre-school service,
- Regulation 19(1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- Regulation 20(1)(a)(b)(4) – Facilities for Rest and Play,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,
- Regulation 25(1),(2)(a)(b)– First aid,
- Regulation 26(1)(a)(b),(4)– Fire safety measures,
- Regulation 27 – Supervision,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

The scope of the inspection included the playroom used by the service.

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, 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.

(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 has 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 arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

The service had a clear management structure and staff were observed to work as a team to look after the care needs of the children and as they participated in play activities with the children.

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(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references from past employers were held on file in respect of one staff member. A written validated reference from a past employer and a written validated reference from a source other than a past employer were held on file in respect of the second staff member. Two written references from reputable sources were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were held on file in respect of all staff members. 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 not required as none of the staff had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as adults.

(3)

It was confirmed by the registered provider that the necessary vetting procedures were conducted prior to the appointment of staff to work in the service.

(4)

The three staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 6 on the National Qualifications 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 worked directly with the children on the day of inspection.

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(3)

Three staff members cared for 12 children in the age range 2 years and 8 months to 5 years for sessional care on the day of 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

(1)(a) to (i)

The inspector reviewed four enrolment forms for children in attendance at the service. The records reviewed were observed to include the necessary detail outlined in (1)(a) to (i) of regulation 15.

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### 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:*

*(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

*(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(h)

The inspector reviewed the attendance records for the children for the 9, 10 and 11 of March 2026 and for the week beginning 5 January 2026. Attendance records confirmed that the children were signed in and out of the service daily during these periods.

(i)

The inspector also reviewed the sign in and out records maintained for the staff working in the service for the 9, 10 and 11 of March 2026 and the week beginning 5 January 2026. The three staff working in the service were noted to be working and had signed in and out of the service for the dates 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 taken as a group to the sanitary accommodation for supervised hand washing before break time in the service and tables were cleaned by a staff member. During break time children enjoyed sandwiches, crackers, yogurts, raisins, fresh fruit including apple pieces and oranges which were provided from home and served on plastic plates. Children had drinks from beakers of water from home. Staff had lunch sitting with the children and engaged in pleasant social interaction on topics including where their siblings were on the day of inspection and their home settings. Children were given time to finish their lunch at their own pace while other

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children moved to sit on the soft couch in the room and look at books of their choice. Children were observed to be praised for returning lunch boxes to bags for take home as they finished eating.

Children were engaged in story time as staff members provided each child with a soft bear while the staff member read “Goldilocks and the Baby Bear”. The children were encouraged to use their bear to mimic the story while being shown pictures from the book by the staff member. During song time, staff and children used sign language to augment language and communication with all children in the group setting.

The children enjoyed dressing up in St. Patrick’s Day headpieces and both sang songs and practised “marching” with flags made by the children, in preparation for both the forthcoming rugby match and St. Patrick’s Day, in the company of the staff. A child’s need to be less active was respected by allowing the child to move to a table in the company of a staff member and work with shapes and insets.

Children enjoyed having their pictures taken beside the Leprechaun made from cardboard in the room to send home. Parents were given handovers as they collected their children from the door on the ground floor at the front of the building. The service also availed of an electronic communications application to communicate individual children’s strengths, interests, developmental and care needs to parents. In addition, the artwork on display in the playroom, displayed how the staff and children prepared for festive occasions and could be viewed by parents and guardians when they dropped their children off at the playroom on arrival each day. The walls in the playroom displayed pictures of the children engaging in outdoor activities, tabletop activities indoors and preparing for festive occasions, including Christmas and Easter.

### 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.



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(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

### Compliance Information

#### (1)(a)

The playroom was well stocked with play equipment and materials which were located on open low level shelving for children to see and take toys of their choice to play with. Toys and play equipment were located in defined areas of interest. For example, the home corner had a cooker, dishes, pots, pans and tea sets. Dolls and dolls clothing were provided to assist with home pretend play. Farm machinery and animals were located in an area of the room decorated with a colourful poster of farm animals, sheds and machinery. Toys for tabletop activities were clearly labelled and included jigsaws, games, puzzles, shapes and insets, connection toys, pegs and peg boards. A variety of arts and crafts materials, paper, and cardboard were available for arts and crafts work. A timber log, planting pots and clay were located in the nature area. Dress up clothing was provided in the dress up area.

The staff were observed to meet the needs of the children on the day of inspection as they moved tables and chairs when children expressed an interest in singing and marching to music and organised the low level tables and chairs to allow children to sit with their friends and colour pictures while the staff engaged in leisurely conversation with the children.

#### (b)

A large low level vinyl covered couch, soft cushions, and a soft floor mat were provided in the rest area in the service. Children and a staff member sat in the rest area for story time in the service. Individual children were also observed to take short breaks during the course of the inspection and to sit and relax with a book in the rest area as required.

#### (4)

An astroturf surfaced area enclosed by high level heavy duty wiring was provided at the back of the community building for use by the service for outdoor play. A high level gate entrance secured access to the play area and guarded against unsupervised exit of the children when they played outdoors.

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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 building at ground floor level and to the hallway at first floor level was secured with a key code. A doorbell was provided on both doors to facilitate access, for example, in the event of a late arrival of a child to the service. Cleaning agents and chemicals were stored in a locked cabinet in the playroom. Morning checklists were maintained in the service to ensure that the playroom, sanitary accommodation and outdoor play area were organised and free of clutter.

##### Infection Control:

The playroom surfaces, toys and play equipment were clean and in a good state of repair and maintenance and on the day of inspection. Completed cleaning schedules were maintained for the toys, work surfaces and sanitary accommodation. A refrigerator was provided in the playroom for storage of perishable snacks provided from home.

##### Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered to children on the day of inspection. Enrolment forms for children included written parental consent for the administration of temperature reducing medication in the event of an emergency. Temperature reducing medication was stored on a high level shelf in the playroom.

##### Fire Safety:

The entrance hallway at ground and first floor level were clear, and fire exits were clearly marked. A fire assembly point was posted on the wall in the carpark at the front of the building.

##### Outing:

The registered provider advised that the service did not participate in organised outings.

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### 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 three staff members had FAR (first aid responder) training with expiry dates of December 2026 in the case of one staff member, March 2027 in the case of one staff member and January 2028 in the case of the remaining staff member.

(2)(a)(b)

A first aid box was stored on a high level shelf in the playroom, in an area easily accessible to staff caring for the children in attendance at 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)

A record was maintained of fire drills as conducted in the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on 23 February 2026.

(b)

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The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment confirmed that an annual service was conducted in October 2025. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system confirmed that a service was conducted on 20 September 2025.

(4)

The procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display on the wall in the playroom 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

The entrance to the children's sanitary accommodation in the hallway was located directly opposite the entrance door to the playroom. Staff were observed to be mindful of the dignity of each child as they supervised the children by sound and talked to the children when out of sight for short periods, using the toilets and engaging in hand washing. Children were observed to be supervised by both sight and sound and by constant conversation with the children, while in the playroom, to ensure their care and developmental needs were met while engaging in play activities.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service has insurance cover for 22 children in daily attendance in a sessional service. Insurance cover was valid from 26 March 2025 to 25 March 2026.