

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX074
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Name of Service:	Little Ducklings Playschool
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Address of Service:	Balycanew Parish Hall, Ballycanew, Gorey, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y25 X278
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Name of Registered Provider:	Andrea McCauley
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Primary Care Centre, Castle Park, Arklow, Co. Wicklow Y14 AE10
Inspection undertaken by:	L O' Connor
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	Non-applicable
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Description of service

Little Ducklings Playschool is located in Ballycanew, Gorey. The service operates from 9.15am-12.15pm Monday to Friday during term time only. It caters for 33 preschool children aged 2 to 6 years old. The service delivers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. It operates from the parish hall, and the children are provided with access to one combined space which consists of the main care room and a section of the adjoining hall. The outdoor area is located within the grounds of the parish hall and is within close proximity to the service.

Staffing

The service employs four adults, including the registered provider who works directly with the children. The staff members had at a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or higher.

On the day of inspection, there were three adults in 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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15; Record of pre-school child.

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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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The deputy designated person in charge of the service was present in the service.
- (b) The deputy designated person was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at the service and was present for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) The staff files of three adults who were employed by the service since the previous inspection in October 2023 were reviewed. The following was available;
- (a)(b) Six validated references were available for the three adults.
- (c) Three Garda Vetting disclosures were available for review. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Through a review of documentation, it was determined that police vetting was not required.
- (3) Recruitment and vetting procedures were carried out in advance of appointment for all staff.
- (4) The adults working directly with the children held 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.

Non-Compliance Information

- (7)(a)
- The inspector was not assured that that the staff member with key responsibilities on the day was familiar with their roles and responsibilities. In discussion, one staff member identified that in the absence of the registered provider, the role of fire officer was their responsibility. However, they were not familiar with the location of the firefighting equipment in the service or the fire assembly point. While it is noted that another staff member provided the inspector with the information regarding the assembly point. However, the staff member with key responsibilities did not have adequate information to effectively carry out their duties. This was at variance with the service fire safety policy which stated that all employees were trained on the service fire safety policy. This posed an increased risk of a potential delay or effective response the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff have attended a staff meeting and the registered provider spoke to about their roles and responsibilities and also about what is expected of them when the owner is not available. The service have agreed on a monthly review on a one-to-one basis to ensure everyone is aware and doing as required. To prevent this non-compliance, the registered provider has introduced a pro-active approach that ensures monthly reviews and opportunities for

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training/continuous professional development.

Summary Comment

The requirement for Regulation 9 Management and recruitment (7) has been met, and it will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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)(3)

The adult to child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. There were 3 adults working directly with 16 pre-school children. There was an adequate number of adults working in the service to support and care for the children. On the day, the children were engaged in outdoor play for most of the inspection. The number of staff present was sufficient staff to facilitate times which required them to return indoor to the service. For example, when children required the toilet or early collections.

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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)-(i)

A sample of children's enrolment records were reviewed, and the required information was in place for each child selected within the sample.

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

The inspector observed that staff supported children to develop and refine their skills as the children were provided with time, space and opportunity to play in the outdoors. Staff described how much children enjoyed outdoor play. This was reflective of the service's outdoor policy which stated that the children would play outdoors every day. The children were immersed in many different types of play, which was supported by the

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layout and materials provided. Children had access to many opportunities to develop their balance and co-ordination through flat ground where children ran, walked and crawled on. There was a hill in the outdoor area which provided children with opportunities to run down and climb back up. Many children were observed to run down the hill at different paces, with some children continuing to develop the skill of balancing. Staff members provided the children with prompts and support when required to further develop these skills. For example, while using the wooden beam. Staff members provided support through holding the child's hand or remaining close by while they were walking on the beam. They also provided support through providing prompts such as naming what was happening for the child e.g. is it wobbly, do you need to stand still to get your balance. The opportunities provided for movement were intentional and reflective of the service's policy on outdoor play which described how children would be provided with access to a range of outdoor activities to climb, run, crawl and balance. The staff were familiar with individual children's interests and play preferences. For example, a staff member noticed that one child was distanced from the group, they asked the child if they would like to go the slide. The child responded excitedly and when the child went down the slide, the staff member warmly responded saying 'you love going on the slide don't you'. These responsive relationships between the staff members and children will support children's confidence and well-being.

The staff members were familiar with the children including their individual needs. They outlined that while indoors, the children were divided into two smaller groups and that there were two staff members assigned to each group. The staff members explained that this approach allowed for positive relationships to be built. In conversation, it was evident that there was a close relationship between the children, their families and the service.

The children returned indoors for snack time which was an unhurried and calm experience. There was a chatter for the duration of snack time with children talking about many things, including the food they had to eat, their favourite foods and who made their lunch. The staff members sat with the children and ate their lunch too. This practice was reflective of the service's healthy eating policy which stated that the atmosphere during snack time was relaxed and enjoyable for children.

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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:

The service practiced the procedures as set out in their outdoor play policy relating to safety in the outdoor area. The outdoor area and equipment was observed to be well maintained. The wooden surfaces of the play equipment and surrounding fence were free from splinters and protruding nails. The plastic equipment, including the slide and playhouse, was in good condition. There was bark on the ground which was evenly spread throughout.

The outdoor area was within a close distance to the service. When leaving and/or returning to the service, the children were placed into pairs and walked at an unhurried pace. The three staff members positioned themselves at the top, middle and back of the group of children.

The food, including grapes, which children ate at snack time was appropriately quartered or halved. The staff members were observed to visually check children's lunchboxes during snack time.

Hazardous items, including cleaning products were stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

The children and staff members were observed to follow the service's handwashing procedures. Handwashing was carried out when the children returned indoors from outdoor play, and after toileting. The children and staff members had access to warm water, soap and paper towels, as per the service's infection control policy.

Fire Safety:

Through discussion with staff members and a review of records, the service followed their fire safety policy and carried out monthly fire drills. The most recent fire drill was carried out on 12/02/2026. The fire exits were unobstructed and clearly identifiable through emergency signage which was in place.

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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) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced through discussion with the staff and the in-date FAR certification provided for inspection.
- (2) The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises and were out of the reach of the children. While outdoors, the first aid box was brought and it was accessible.

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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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Through a review of documentation and discussion with staff, it was confirmed that the service carried out regular fire drills.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(b)
- The registered provider confirmed that annual maintenance was not carried out on the firefighting equipment or smoke alarms in the service. The maintenance checks on the smoke alarms was dated as 2024 and the firefighting equipment checks were carried out in 2021. This practice was at variance of the service's own fire safety policy which stated that annual maintenance would be carried out. This posed an increased risk to the safety of the children and staff as the absence of regular maintenance may affect the effectiveness of the fire safety equipment and cause a delay in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The maintenance checks were carried out on 26 May 2026. To prevent this recurring, the registered provider has placed a reminder on calendar to ensure the service is completed on time.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of the maintenance checks carried out

Summary Comment

The requirement for Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures has been met and will be reviewed on the next inspection.