

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2016CC027
--------------------------	-------------

<b>Name of Service:</b>	Curious Minds
-------------------------	---------------

<b>Address of Service:</b>	Dromagh, Mallow, Co Cork
----------------------------	--------------------------

<b>Eircode:</b>	P51 A037
-----------------	----------

<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Marie Sheehy
-------------------------------------	--------------

<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Sessional
----------------------	---------------------

<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	29/01/2026
----------------------------	------------

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	9	PM	4
-----------------------------------	----	---	----	---

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	N O'Donoghue
<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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
---------------------------------	-----

### Description of service

Curious Minds is a privately owned early years care and education service which has been in operation since 2016. It offers a range of services including full-day care, part-time and sessional services to children aged from 2 years to 6 years facilitating the Early Years Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme from 9:30 to 12:30. The service is registered to operate from 7.30am until 6.30pm, 49 weeks of the year, and a school age service is available in the morning from 7.30am until 9.10am and in the afternoon from 2.00pm to 6.30pm. Curious Minds is part of a multiple service.

Curious Minds is situated on the grounds of Dromagh National School on the main Mallow to Killarney Road. It operates from a prefabricated building which consists of one large care room including sanitary facilities and a kitchen area. A dedicated outdoor play area is available at the rear of the service, and the children have use of the school grounds.

### Staffing

There were six adults attached to the service. This included the registered provider who is not service based and five early years educators.

### 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.

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.

## 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 deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection. In the event the person or deputy person in charge were not on the premises a named person able to deputise was available.
  - (b) A person in charge or named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
  - (c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included person in charge, deputy person in charge and early years educator.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that three new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. All of these new staff members work directly with the children. A total of three files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for two staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.
- (a) Of the six references required, five validated references were available from past employers.

- (b) Of the six references required, one validated reference was available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures has been obtained for all adults with direct access to children. 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 deemed to be required for one of the three new adults working in the service and copies of the relevant documents were maintained on file for the adult.

(4) The three adults working directly with children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at least at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

A review of the infection control policy was conducted, and all required elements of the policy were available.

### 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 registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(2) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

- The Curious Minds room in the morning, there were two staff working with nine children aged between 2 years and 9 months and 4 years and 6 months, five of these children were attending sessional care and four attending full day care. In the afternoon, there were two staff working with four children aged between 3 years and 4 years and 6 months.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times during the service operation hours. This was evident through the staff rota and staff sign in.

## 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.*

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*

*I an authorised person.*

### Compliance Information

(1) Children’s enrolment forms were assessed for 10 of the children registered as attending the service. The records inspected had the detail required as listed from (a) to (i).

## 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)

#### Basic needs:

- Staff supported children with toileting. Staff encouraged independence and provided support as required. Children’s nappies were regularly changed throughout the day at two-hour intervals and as needed.
- Children had access to soft tissues to clean their noses themselves. Staff were observed cleaning children’s faces after meals and throughout the day.
- Drink bottles of water were brought in from home, children had access to these bottles at all times and were stored on child height shelving.
- Staff provided support to children that needed help when eating and children were encouraged to be self-sufficient.

### Supporting relationships:

- Staff spoke with children at their level, in a calm and relaxed tone. Children were at ease with staff and were comfortable in expressing their feelings and emotions to the staff members.
- Children engaged in parallel play and were observed to check in on their friends and include them in play.
- Staff asked children if they wanted to participate in cleaning up, children were observed to freely get the dustpan and brush and support staff with clean up after free play.
- During mealtimes staff sat at the table and engaged in social conversations with the children.

### Physical environment:

- The children were observed to freely move around the care room and outdoor area. All children had access to the outdoor area throughout the inspection.
- Children were encouraged to engage in a wide range of gross motor skills including jumping, running and bouncing.
- Fine motor skills were encouraged through puzzles, colouring and sorting activities.
- The care room was broken into clearly identified areas including construction, role-play, kitchen, and creative corner.
- A rest/quiet area was available in the care room consisting of rubber mats, pillows and cushions if children required it.

### Programme of activities:

- Staff explained that the activities are child led, and children voice their interests and staff support their knowledge and learning through songs, activities, games and crafts.
- The theme of the week was 'Recycling,' children were observed discussing various types of recycling during circle time. The children's learning was further reinforced by completing an activity of matching rubbish to the correct bin.
- On discussion with the person in charge, a group activity was planned during the week where children created artwork consisting of recycled materials including bottle tops, yoghurt containers and paper.

## 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 internal and external doors of the service were secured and prevented children from exiting the premises and unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- Toys and equipment assessed appeared in good condition and was well maintained.
- Blind cords were securely out of reach of children.
- The openable windows were out of reach of children.

##### Infection control:

- Windows were open which allowed for fresh air circulation.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the refrigerators.
- Water temperatures were recorded in the sanitary facility between 38°C to 43°C.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities.
- Foot operated bins were available in each room and sanitary facility.

##### Administration of medication:

- No administration of medication was observed on the day of inspection. Discussion with staff ensured staff were aware of the correct process for administering medication in the event it was required.

##### Fire safety:

- Fire equipment was available which included fire extinguishers.
- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and clearly identified.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### Infection control:

It was observed that staff or children did not wash their hands after nappy changing. The handwashing procedures during the nappy changing was at variance to the infection control policy. Not ensuring regular handwashing put the children and staff at risk of cross infection.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### Infection control:

The registered provider stated that all staff have reviewed the infection control policy with emphasis on the nappy changing and hand hygiene procedures. Staff have received guidance on hand washing procedures and future staff will be training on the importance of hand hygiene.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### Infection control:

A copy of the infection control policy was received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

A copy of the insurance certificate for the service was furnished to the inspector. The information provided on the insurance certificate included:

- The contact details for the insurance provider.
- The name and address of the service insured.
- The number of children covered by the insurance was 22 children.
- The categories of insurance cover for the service.

The expiry date of the current insurance cover was 27 March 2026.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

*(b) safe and secure,*

*(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

#### Compliance Information

(b) The service was maintained in a safe and secure manner. The entrance door was secured which prevented the entry of an unauthorised person or the exit of a child unsupervised. All visitors had to sign in and sign out of the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(d) The children's sanitary facility was not maintained, the walls had visible stains surrounding the sinks and hand dryers. On discussion with the person in charge, it was explained that the walls had not been painted in a long period of time.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that the children's sanitary area is cleaned daily and after use, as necessary. It has been arranged to have the sanitary area painted when the service is closed. Any areas that require to be repaired will be completed in the future.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider's statement has been accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

#### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 has been adequately addressed. This will be reviewed on next inspection.