

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CE002		
Name of Service:	Little Buds Pre-School		
Address of Service:	St. Aidan's National School, Shannon, Co. Clare		
Eircode:	V14 AW77		
Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Egan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	09/06/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM 6
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Ennis Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare		
Inspection undertaken by:	J Hayes		
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

This service was first registered and opened in 2016. The sessional service is privately run from a single storey prefabricated classroom in St. Aidan's National School. It caters for up to a maximum of 22 pre-school children on a sessional basis at any one time. The children are aged between 2 years and eight months and 6 years. The service is open Monday-Fridays between the hours of 08.45 - 11.45 and 12.30- 15.30, providing a morning and afternoon session.

A dedicated fully enclosed outdoor space is available for the sole use of the children attending the service.

Staffing

The registered provider operates the sessional service assisted by two adults who were present on the day when the inspection was carried out.

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 regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

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

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

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)(4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

(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.

(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 registered provider was the designated person in charge and was present on the day of the inspection. There was a second person available to deputise if needed.

(b) The staff roster indicated that the designated person in charge or their deputy was always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for each adult working at the service.

(b) All references were from either past employers or from reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all adults working at the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) All adults working at the service had an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for one adult working at the service who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period longer than 6 consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The outstanding police clearance document has been applied for, and the service will ensure that all adults have the required documentation in place going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

The outstanding police clearance certificate was submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken have addressed the non-compliance under Regulation 9(2)(d).

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) The registered provider ensured that the correct number of adults were rostered to work at the service each day. Evidence of this was noted in the staff and children sign in books.

(3) On the day of the inspection, there were 3 adults present with 18 pre-school children for the morning session. There was 1 adult present with 6 pre-school children for the afternoon session. The adult/child ratio was correct on both occasions.

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

The service aimed to support each child's learning, development, and well-being by implementing suitable programs and care practices tailored to individual interests and needs. A healthy eating policy was in place, with parents providing nutritious snacks and drinks for pre-school children. The adults sat with children and encouraged social interaction during mealtime in an unhurried manner.

Children had easy access to nearby toilets equipped with hot water, liquid soap, and paper towels for effective hand hygiene. Foot pedal bins ensured safe disposal of tissues and hand towels, with staff available to assist when necessary. The children were encouraged to wash their hands before mealtimes and after toileting, outdoor play or messy play. Spare clothes and protective gear for messy activities were provided. Children also enjoyed daily outdoor playtime in the designated outdoor play area adjacent to the building.

Physical and material environment

The playroom was a spacious, well-lit room with multiple interest areas accessible to the children, including a construction play area with blocks, bricks, and magnetic materials, a home corner with kitchen and supporting utensils ; an imagination play area with dress-up clothes; a quiet reading corner with soft furnishings next to a low-level book stand and a large tray with lentils to support sensory play.

Child-sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities. Toys and play equipment throughout the room were visible in clearly labelled, easily accessible storage boxes. Posters were displayed to provide information on sensory play, emerging interests, feelings and well being, friends from different countries, outside fun such as planting, digging and potting and healthy eating.

Materials and equipment were changed and rotated as needed based on the children's emergent interests, curriculum plans, preferences, and ability levels. The outdoor facilities at the service were available to the children

each day for physical exercise and play. Children were always supervised when playing outside, with a wide range of interest areas developed to continue to support the children’s learning and development. The children were observed to enjoy imaginative and messy play with sand and mud and water and physical activities which included climbing sliding and using ride on toys. A planting area where children had planted flowers in small pots was available in one corner of the outdoor space.

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:

To ensure the safety of the children attending the service, there was evidence of a risk management policy being implemented. Staff were familiar with the requirements and had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the risk management policy. Daily inspection of play areas, both indoors and outside took place. Equipment, materials and furnishings in the service appeared safe and were located in areas to prevent collisions and injuries to children.

All cleaning agents and hazardous equipment were stored in a high shelf in the kitchen area that was inaccessible to children.

The outdoor play area was fully secured with high level fencing and gates, and external doors were secured to prevent unauthorised access to the service.

Fire Safety:

Regular fire drills took place at the service which included a complete evacuation of the service to a prearranged designated assembly point. All firefighting equipment was serviced on a regular basis and all fire alarm and smoke alarms were checked each year by a competent person with appropriate training. The two fire exit doors were clear and unobstructed, clearly identified, and easily opened from the inside

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 of the three adults in the service had current certification in First Aid response.

(2) (a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and stored in a readily accessible area and available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency

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 demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 07 May 2025.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system took place respectively on the 08 October 2024 and on the 17 April 2025

(4)

Fire action notices were displayed demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for the childcare facility. The insurance policy for the childcare facility is valid until 27 March 2026.