

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CW004		
Name of Service:	In Safe Hands Early Learning & Care Centre Ltd		
Address of Service:	St. Mary's National School, Royal Oak Road, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow		
Eircode:	R21 P440		
Name of Registered Provider:	Veronica Byrne		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	22/05/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM 9
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow		
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton		
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

In Safe Hands Early Learning & Care Centre Ltd is a registered part-time service operating from a premises previously used as St. Mary's National School in Bagenalstown, in county Carlow. The service provides a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service and part-time childcare for children aged 2 to 5 years. The service is comprised of two classrooms in the main building and a third classroom in the adjacent prefabricated. There is a secure outdoor play area at the back of the main premises and a large car park to the front of the building.

Staffing

There were ten staff employed in the service, including the registered provider. All staff employed in the service to work directly with the children held qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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.

The inspection focused on assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 15, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 10, 15, 21 and 23.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the three classrooms and outdoor space.

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.

(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 designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (b) The staff roster demonstrated that one of the following, the registered provider, designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation.
- (c) A clear outline of the management of the structure was displayed in the service, identifying the lines of authority, accountability, the roles, and responsibilities of individual staff members in the service.
- (2) Staff files for ten staff members, including the registered provider were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the ten staff members, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as no staff member employed in the service had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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

On review of the service's policies the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that all required documents specified in Schedule 5, were available in the service and were communicated to the staff as part of their induction process on commencing employment in the service, with annual reviews and revisions taking place as appropriate.

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) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in each of the three classrooms throughout the inspection. In the morning there were 14 children aged 2 years and 8 months in the Sunshine Classroom cared for by 3 staff members.

In the Rocket classroom 11 children aged 2 years and 8 months were cared for by 2 staff members.

In the Little Comets classroom, the adjacent prefabricated classroom, there were 6 children aged 2 to 2 years and 8 months directly cared for by 2 staff members.

In the afternoon there were 9 children aged 2 to 5 years of age cared for by 4 staff members.

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff the inspector was assured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

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) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of pre-school children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each preschool child.

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

Throughout the three classrooms there was adequate and appropriate furniture, play equipment and materials provided for the children.

Each classroom contained age-appropriate interest areas which included kitchen/ home areas, construction areas, rest and reading areas and tables created with themed sensory materials such as small world animal figurines, and sensory materials.

There were child level shelves which provided children with access to a variety of colourful and wooden manipulative, connective and stackable materials, jigsaws, pegboards, bead and maze tables and mark making materials.

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 was secured with a keypad system at the main entrance, to prevent any unauthorised person from entering the building and to prevent any child exiting the building unsupervised. The outdoor play area was secured with a high wall and a wooden gate at each gable end.

The inspector observed that the children accessed the outdoor play area through the rear wooden gate and that staff ensured that the main gate from the carpark to the main road was securely closed while the children crossed the carpark area to go outside.

All cleaning products and equipment had a designated storage area out of the reach of the children.

Infection Control:

There was an adequate number of toilet and nappy changing facilities provided in the service to meet the needs of the children attending the service.

Each toilet unit had child height handwash basins, supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

The older children were observed to use the toilet and hand washing facilities independently, while staff supported and assisted the younger children as needed.

Staff were observed to support and prompt the children to wash their hands correctly after using the toilet, nappy-changing, after messy and outdoor play, and before snack times.

Staff were observed to carry out nappy changing procedures in line with the service's nappy changing policy and in adherence with the service's hand washing and infection control policy.

Administration of Medication:

While there were no medications currently required to be administered to any child in the service, the staff were well informed of the procedure to be followed in administering any type of medication to a child, in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Safe Sleep:

Each classroom had an inviting rest area for children to relax and opt out of activities in.

staff informed the inspector that there was also a supply of stackable beds and suitable fitted sheets with cellular blankets available for any child who was observed to want to or needed to nap or sleep while attending. The stackable beds were placed in a quiet area of the classroom, with staff observing and physically checking the sleeping child every ten minutes, in line with the service's safe sleep policy.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff in each of the three classrooms demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's daily attendance and departure times from the service were recorded.

(3)(a)(b) The staff ensured that no other person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without their entry being approved by an employee. All authorised visitors to the service were required to record the date of entry, their name, contact number, reason for entry, check in and out times on the visitors record book located at the main entrance.

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)

There were two staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, there was at least one staff member with FAR training present. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection. The inspector was reassured by the designated person in charge that additional staff members were due to attend first aid responder training in the coming months

(2)(a)(b)

There was first aid bag available in each of the three classrooms and a first aid box available at the exit door to the outdoor play space.

The first aid contents were adequate, and records demonstrated that the first aid contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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.
- (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) The following fire safety records were maintained.
- (a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 19 May 2025.
 - (2) The fire safety records were available and open for inspection by the early years inspector or by a parent / employee on request.
 - (3) The designated person in charge demonstrated that records were maintained for the five years prior to inspection.
 - (4) The registered provider ensured that a fire evacuation procedure notice was clearly displayed in the main entrance hall.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(b) While the registered provider maintained a record of the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service, the last maintenance check for the fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in August 2023 and for the smoke alarm system was recorded as having taken

place on 12 December 2022. This was not in line with fire safety recommendations whereby an annual maintenance check of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarm systems is recommended. A referral has been sent to the county chief fire officer.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following corrective and preventive actions were submitted by the registered provider.

Corrective and Preventive Action

A fire safety company have completed a thorough check and have been contracted to test and maintain the fire equipment. Fire equipment has been checked and updated as needed.

The service now has a contract for fire safety maintenance and fire equipment checks regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of recently serviced fire-fighting equipment.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a part-time childcare service for up to 60 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.