

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2016MO012

**Name of Service:** Joannas Pre-school

**Address of Service:** Behy Community Hall, Behy Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo

**Eircode:** F26 F660

**Name of Registered Provider:** Joanna Sheridan

**Service type:** Sessional

**Date of Inspection:** 19/09/2023

**No of pre-school children:** AM 28 PM -

**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Early Year's Inspectorate,  
TUSLA, Child and Family Agency,  
2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ.,  
Castlebar,  
Co. Mayo.

**Inspection undertaken by:** M Farrell and A Kennedy

**Title:** Early Years Inspectors

### 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

Joannas Pre-school is privately owned and operated and is registered to provide sessional services to children aged from 2-6 years of age. The sessional services operate between 9am to 12midday in the morning and from 1:30pm to 4:30pm in the afternoon. The service is located in a rural area in a dedicated section of a two-storey community hall on the grounds of Behy National School near Ballina in Co. Mayo. There are two playrooms in the premises, one located on the ground floor and a second playroom located upstairs. A kitchen and sanitary facilities are also provided in the building. The service has exclusive access to an enclosed outdoor play area with outdoor play equipment located to the side of the premises. The service also has access to a large indoor hall in the building accessible from the entrance lobby. The service is registered to provide school aged childcare services.

### Staffing

There are eight adults who work directly with the children in the service including the registered provider and Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) staff. An additional staff member provides administrative support.

### 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 16, 19, 23 and 31. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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.

### Additional Information

The inspection was triggered by information received by the Tusla Inspectorate. The inspection process included a review of the regulations relevant to the information submitted.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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*

*(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 there was a named adult to deputise in her absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premise throughout the period of inspection. A sample of attendance records viewed by the inspectors showed that the designated person in charge or the deputy were present in the service whenever it was in operation.
- (2) The registered provider informed the inspectors that there were three new staff working in the service since the most recent inspection of the 7 October 2022. The vetting documentation for the other five staff had been reviewed on previous inspection.
- The following vetting information was available for the three staff new to the service:
- (a) Two written references from past employers in particular the most recent employer for the three staff members.
- (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for three adults.
- (d) The vetting documentation on file showed that international police vetting was not required for the three staff members new to the service since the last inspection.
- (4) Certification of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or equivalent qualification was available for the two staff members new to the service since the most recent inspection who worked directly with the preschool children.

### 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

Written copies of the policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place in the service and available for review by the inspectors on request.

### 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) On the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service there were 6 staff members working directly with the 28 children present. The registered provider arrived at the service shortly after the inspectors' arrival and provided direct care to children in both playrooms during the inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio of 1 adult to each 11 children for the age range of the children present attending sessional services was adhered to with 6 adults working with 28 children.

## 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 of each pre-school child on a daily basis,*

*(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

*(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.*

### Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) A daily attendance record book was kept by the staff in both playrooms. The times of arrival and departure of each child was recorded.
  - (k) Details of accidents, injuries and incidents involving children were recorded in a record book in the service. Samples reviewed contained adequate details of the accident or incident and evidence to show that parents or guardians of children attending were informed.

### 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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a)

##### **BASIC NEEDS**

The children's snacks containing for example sandwiches, crackers, rolls, yoghurts and prepared fruits were provided from home and eaten in the playrooms. The children sat together in groups at tables to eat their snack supervised by the staff who chatted with them encouraging conversations and helping them if needed. The children had individual drink containers that were accessible to them during the session.

The children who were fully toilet-trained were observed to be encouraged by staff to use the toilet by themselves when they needed to during the inspection supporting independence. Six of the younger children from Playroom 1 wore nappies and had their nappies changed on a regular basis, in a timely manner, in the designated nappy changing area.

The children were prompted and assisted to wash their hands as needed after the children used the toilet, engaged in messy play with playdough and before eating their snacks. Individual cubby holes were provided in Playroom 1 downstairs and Playroom 2 upstairs for children to store their personal belongings in.

Relaxation areas with soft seating were available to the children in the playrooms beside the book corners should children choose to rest.

The children were observed to move freely between the different areas of interest in the playrooms during the session. On the day, the children used the large indoor hall for active play enjoying running games and playing with hula hoops and mini rugby balls.

##### **SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:**

The staff members demonstrated warmth and positive regard for the children and their families in their greetings and verbal exchanges on arrival to the service. Individual electronic messaging systems were used to provide information to parents as needed with verbal information given to parents at collection times.

The staff were observed to work well together linking with each other throughout the session to co-ordinate activities smoothly. The staff advised the children of approaching transitions during the session such as *“tidy up time”* where a *“tidy up”* song was played.

Photographs of the children’s families were displayed on family walls at low levels in the playrooms so children could see them helping to develop links between home and the service.

A key worker system was in place for the children to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The role of the key worker was to liaise with parents/guardians.

The staff were observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children. The staff were interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them, and responded to their requests.

### **PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT**

There were two playrooms in the service named Playroom 1 that was downstairs and catered for the younger children in the service and Playroom 2 located upstairs. Toys and play equipment were stored in low level storage units that were easily accessible by the children. The play equipment was arranged in defined areas of interest for example home corners with a play kitchen and play accessories, small world areas, a selection of musical instruments, farm areas reflecting the rural setting of the service and messy play areas with sand and water tables, construction area with a work bench and a selection of tools and dress up areas. Additional supplies of toys and equipment were stored in a storeroom upstairs and rotated with toys in the playrooms during the year. Age-appropriate books were provided in both playrooms for the children to view. Selections of art and craft supplies were provided for artwork in each of the playrooms.

The children had exclusive access to an enclosed outdoor play area that had a canopy providing shelter extending from the side of the building. A large well-equipped wooden playhouse for messy play with sand was a recent addition to the space with wooden fencing outside surrounding wood bark ground cover. Large wooden mud kitchens were provided for imaginative play in the enclosed outdoor area with ride on toys available to the children to promote physical activity and develop gross motor skills.

(3)

Positive approaches by the staff members to management of children’s behaviours were observed in both playrooms during the inspection reflective of the service’s behaviour management policy. Children were observed to receive guidance and encouragement towards appropriate behaviour from staff members. The staff spoke gently to the children when encouraging them to share, take turns and helping the children to negotiate when problems arose. It was observed that minor problems were handled promptly and positively by the staff.

No practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful were observed during the inspection.

### 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 main entrance door was secured on the inspectors' arrival to the service preventing children from leaving and people from entering without authorisation. The internal doors to the playroom areas had securing mechanisms in place allowing staff to control entry to the areas. There was a safety gate in place to control access to the kitchenette area in the upstairs playroom and a high-level lock was provided on the door to the kitchen off the downstairs playroom. The stairwell was well lit and age-appropriate handrails were in place to assist children using the staircase. The children were supervised closely by staff when going up and down the stairs. Cleaning products were stored in secured cupboards and were inaccessible to the children. The play equipment in use on the day of inspection was observed to be in good condition and appropriate for the age range of the children using it. Daily risk assessments were carried out in areas of the services by the staff members with written records recorded on checklists. Daily records of attendance were kept for all of children attending the playrooms.

##### Infection Control:

The staff cleaned down surfaces and equipment regularly and completed written records of the cleaning procedures undertaken. Warm water controlled below 43°C, paper towel and liquid soap were available for handwashing and drying with foot pedal operated bins provided for waste disposal. Refrigerators were available for the storage of perishable food items under 5°C. The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.

##### Administration of Medication:

Medication was not observed to be administered to a child during the inspection. Emergency medication was stored in a high cupboard in Playroom 2 with a care plan providing instructions in relation to administration should it be required. The staff demonstrated an awareness of the correct procedures for the storage and administration of medicines through discussion with the inspectors.

##### Fire Safety:

The emergency exits were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

### Outing:

During the inspection the children from Playroom 2 used the large indoor hall adjacent to the service which was treated as an outing. The staff brought first aid equipment and the children attendance record books with them and carried out head counts of the children appropriately during this time.

The service had access to a large enclosed artificial grass playing pitch and a garden on the primary school premises. The registered provider informed the inspectors that these facilities were not yet in use since the commencement of the new preschool year. The registered provider advised the inspectors that the service treated the use of these areas as outings and had undertaken risk assessments of the spaces which were to be updated prior to recommencing use of the spaces.

## Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

### Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

*A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:*

*(e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

The service had a policy in place detailing that the Agency is to be notified in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the incidents occurring in the preschool service relating to (e).

The staff advised the inspectors that no such notifiable incidents had occurred in the service since the most recent inspection.