

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016MO012
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Name of Service:	Joannas Pre-school
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Address of Service:	Behy Community Hall, Behy Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F26 F660
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Name of Registered Provider:	Joanna Sheridan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2 nd Floor, St Mary's HQ, Castlebar, Co Mayo.
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Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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.
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Description of service

Joannas Pre-school is privately owned and operated sessional service registered to provide care to children aged from 2-6 years of age. The service operates from 9am to 12midday in the morning. The service is registered to provide a session from 1:30pm to 4:30pm in the afternoon but is not providing this service at present. The service is in a dedicated section of a two-storey community hall on the grounds of Behy National School in a rural setting 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 nine staff members working in the service including childcare staff and administrative staff. Three staff members are employed through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Scheme. The registered provider rotates between the service and a sister service in a nearby village and works directly with the children.

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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16, 21, 24, 27 and 28. 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.

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

(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

(2) There were nine staff in the service including childcare staff and administrative staff at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documents were made available for the nine staff:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for five staff. One written validated reference from a past employer for four staff.
- (b) One written validated reference from sources other than past employers for four staff.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all nine adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
- (d) International police vetting with translation was available where required for one staff member.

(4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was made available for the eight staff who worked directly with the preschool children.

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 8 staff members including the registered provider working directly with the 20 children present.
- (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 8 adults working with 20 children. During the session, 4 staff cared for 8 children in the downstairs playroom and 4 staff cared for 12 children in the upstairs playroom.

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-*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) to (i)
- The inspector selected a random sample of ten of children's records from across both playrooms for review. The children's records contained the information required under the regulation.
- (3) (c)
- The registered provider made the required written records available to the inspector on the premises on request.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (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) The registered provider ensured written records were kept of the following information in the service:
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the staff members.
 - (b) Information on the service types and ages of children that the service is registered to provide in the service’s statement of purpose and function.
 - (c) Details of the adult to child ratios in the service.
 - (d) Information on the type of care or programme provided in the service.
 - (e) Details of the facilities available in the service.
 - (f) Information regarding the service’s hours of opening and fees.

- (g) The service’s policies, procedures and statements as required under Regulation 10 that were kept in a service policy folder.
 - (h) Details of the attendance of each pre-school child recorded daily in attendance books.
 - (i) Details of the staff daily working hours on a staff attendance record.
 - (j) A medication record book to record medication administration should it be required to be given to a child.
 - (k) An accident and incident record book recording details of any accidents and incidents that had occurred in the service.
- (3) The records were made available to the inspector in the service by the registered provider on request.

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

There was a wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate play equipment available to the children in both playrooms. The playrooms were arranged in similar defined interest areas. These areas included for example home corners with toy plastic and metal kitchen utensils, toy work bench with tools, construction area with blocks and transport toys. There were small world toys such as dolls houses with dolls and furniture, and musical instruments were included in the equipment available to the children. The playrooms had rest areas with soft wipeable seating and children had access to selections of age-appropriate books. The toys and play equipment were displayed at low levels in accessible storage systems allowing children to choose the toys that they would like to play with. Large supplies of tabletop activities were stored in open shelving including jigsaws and insert puzzles of varying degrees of difficulty.

Messy play activities were available in both playrooms. These included sand and water tables and when the inspector entered the Upstairs playroom, children were observed playing at an activity table with soapy water and bubbles. Children in the Downstairs playroom were observed to play with play dough in groups at tables making “pizzas”. Aprons were available to protect children’s clothes, both indoors and outdoors, when painting or engaging in messy play. Painting areas were set up with easels, paper, paint and brushes in both playrooms ready for use and children were observed to choose to use this equipment. Other craft equipment included coloured stickers that children made pictures with by placing them on cards.

There was a large supply of outdoor equipment in the outdoor play area exclusive to the service including items such as coloured plastic waffle blocks, building blocks, water tables and mud kitchens. A range of large toys

included tractors and ride in cars that were stored near a wooden playhouse with an artificial grass step up to it. The service had developed a large wooden playhouse outdoors for sand play with a securable door. The playhouse had shelving that was waist level to a child with sand, buckets, spades, digging toys provided.

Tables waist-high to the children and chairs appropriate to the heights and developmental stages of the children were provided for activities including tabletop work, group activities and mealtimes. There was wooden seating in the outdoor area.

The service also had access to sensory areas in the primary school that had soft padding, sensory lights and wipeable beanbags used on a one-to-one basis when needed according to the registered provider.

The toys, play equipment and furniture were found to be clean, appropriately maintained and in good condition. The staff carried out daily risk checks of equipment. Cleaning schedules and records for toys, play equipment and furniture were available in the service.

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) Records showed that a designated member of staff checked each child in and out of the service during the inspection. These details were recorded in an attendance record.

(3) (a) There was a visitor record kept in the ground floor hallway of the service. The visitor record showed that the staff approved the entry to the service of people other than a preschool child attending the service, a person dropping off a preschool child, employee or unpaid worker.

(b) The records contained dated entries of visitors to the service.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The staff were observed to supervise the children primarily by sight throughout the inspection. The children were out of sight when using the toilet but within earshot of the staff if they needed help or assistance. At snack time, the staff were observed to sit with the children to supervise them closely when eating in the Upstairs playroom. The staff were observed to supervise the children from the Upstairs playroom closely when using the stairs to go downstairs to access the hall for play. One staff member went downstairs at the front of the group of children to supervise them. The other staff members at the top of the stairs supervised the children walking down them and reminded them to use the handrail provided. The staff were observed to move around to keep children in their line of vision when playing outside in the service’s outdoor area.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance in place for the provision of sessional services valid until the 27 March 2026 for a maximum of thirty-one children in the service.