

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2017LS500		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Baby Bear's Pre-School		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	30 Clondarrig Court, Bellingham, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois		
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 C8NK		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Carol Phelan		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	13/03/2026		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	8	PM NA
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	C.O' Connor Hughes		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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>	Not applicable.		

### Description of service

The sessional service operates an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) session from 09:15 and 12:15 and an afternoon ECCE session from 12:30 and 15:30 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is operated by an independent provider.

The Early Years' Service is located in the registered provider's home. One pre-school room is provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. The service is located in an urban setting in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Portlaoise, County Laois.

### Staffing

The registered provider was working directly with the children during the inspection on 13 March 2026. An emergency contact person is available located next door to the registered provider. A second emergency person is also available if required.

### 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.

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

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (3)(8)(c)

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

Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials

Regulation 22- Food and Drink

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking in and out and record of attendance (1)(3)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 25- First aid - (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26 -Fire safety measures - (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 27 - Supervision

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 33- Furnishing of information to the Agency

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under;

Regulation 8 - Change in circumstance – (1)

The inspection was carried out in the morning session that operates from 09:15 to 12:15.

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 and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

## Part II - Registration and Register

### Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1)

The registered provider did not submit a change in circumstance to inform TUSLA that the service has been operating as a single-handed service since September 2025.

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

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The registered provider has submitted a change in circumstances form on the Tusla portal and the change in circumstance form indicates a change to a single-handed service.

The registered provider will note any changes to my service and contact local childcare committee for advice on future changes.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Change in circumstance form.

#### Summary Comment

The change in circumstance form has been submitted to the TUSLA registration office.

## 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,*

*(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 is the designated person in charge.

(b)

The service is closed if the registered provider is not available to operate the service.

(c)

Three files were reviewed including the registered provider and two emergency contact persons.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available from past employers in respect of one of emergency contact persons. Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)  
Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the three files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)  
Police vetting was not required in respect of the registered provider and one emergency person as they had not lived outside the country for a period of six months.

(4)  
The registered provider held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at least level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)  
Two written validated references were not in place in respect of one of the emergency contact persons.

(d)  
Police vetting was not available in respect of one emergency contact person.

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

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(2)(a)(b)  
The registered provider has received and validated two references for the emergency contact person. The registered provider will ensure all relevant paperwork is in place for the emergency staff and will review file every 6 months.

(d)  
The registered provider has received policy vetting for the emergency contact person. The registered provider will ensure that should vetting be needed from another country it will applied for it as soon as possible.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

References and Police vetting.

### Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and met the regulatory requirement.

## 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.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

### Compliance Information

(1)  
There were nine children attending the service being supervised directly by the registered provider.

(8)(c)  
A second person familiar with the service was in place as the emergency contact person. The emergency contact person was contacted by the registered provider to check availability to come to the service during the inspection. The Inspector spoke with the emergency contact person and confirmed she was available to assist in the event of emergencies. The registered provider had put a second emergency contact in place if the first person was not available.

### 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 children*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. Children were dressed up for St Patrick's day and enjoyed having their photographs taken with the Irish flag. Children enjoyed party games including music and dancing and tabletop activities during the morning session supported by the registered provider.

Children were encouraged to be independent as they washed their hands and went to the toilet supervised by the registered provider. Children engaged in conversations with the registered provider and their friends as they all ate lunch together in the pre-school room. Discussions took place about the zoo and animals the children like to visit. Children tidied up after lunch and put their lunch boxes in their school bags. Transitions were smooth as a timer was used to give children notice to change from one activity to another.

The registered provider was positive and respectful when speaking to children in a quiet calm tone of voice. The registered provider was familiar with children and their personality. Individual names were used and eye contact maintained with the children during play activities and while sitting with the children at snack time.

The registered provider stated regular updates and information are sent to parents via a newsletter.

A verbal handover is given on collection. Parents are invited to meet with the registered provider as required.

The child's learning journal depicting the child's play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

The indoor and outdoor environments were laid out to meet the developmental needs of the children attending.

The pre-school room was bright and colourful. Children's artwork, child friendly posters and family wall photographs were displayed. The child's individual emerging interest plan was displayed and the child's learning journey booklet was accessible to children on low level racks to read wherever they choose.

## 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

The chairs and portable tables were child sized suitable to each child's age and development. Equipment was well maintained, durable and easy to clean. Materials including bricks, blocks, cars, tractors, books, art and crafts, jigsaws, musical instruments, dolls, construction toys were accessible to children on low level open shelving. The outdoor play area was equipped with a toy kitchen, a climbing frame with slide, a wooden seesaw and large play blocks on a wooden shelf available for children's use.

A variety of suitable play materials and equipment was available to support children in various types of creative, manipulative, imaginary and free play in the indoor and outdoor environments.

Personal belongings and bags were stored individually for each child.

## Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

Parents provided a healthy snack to children attending the morning session.

At 11:00 the snack observed consisted of sandwiches, pasta, yoghurt, fruit, vegetables with water to drink.

A refrigerator was available in the registered provider's kitchen for the storage of perishable foods.

## 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 entrance to the service was safe and secure. The front door to the service was locked which ensured no unauthorised access to the children. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

##### Infection Control:

The premises was visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation in the service. Mechanical ventilation was in operation in the sanitary accommodation. Foot operated pedal bins were noted in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

##### Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely out of reach of children.

##### Fire Safety:

The fire emergency exits were free from obstruction in the service.

##### Outing:

The registered provider stated no outings are undertaken by 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)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)(b)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by the registered provider on the log was retained for the required length of time in the service.

## 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)

The registered provider was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises for the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

An equipped first aid box was located in the pre-school room.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to the registered provider caring for children in the pre-school service.

## 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)

There was a record of fire drills carried out in the service. The last fire drill was carried out on the 24 February 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The smoke alarms and firefighting equipment were serviced on the 9 November 2025 and 22 January 2026.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were noted in a conspicuous location in the premises.

## 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 registered provider supervised children by sight or sound in the pre-school room and when using the toilet during the inspection.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.

## Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

### Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

*A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may reasonably require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider furnished the required information during the inspection.