

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018LS504		
Name of Service:	Maples at Stradbrook		
Address of Service:	Stradbrook, Stradbally Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois		
Eircode:	R32 TKX4		
Name of Registered Provider:	Monica Delaney		
Service type:	Full Day		
Dates of Inspection:	25/09/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM 19
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla, Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4		
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn		
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

Maples at Stradbrook is one of four services operated by the registered provider in the town of Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The premises is on the ground floor of an apartment complex. Maples at Stradbrook offers full day care, parttime and sessional care to children between the age of 0-6 years.

The full day care service operates from 08:00am to 18:00pm and the sessional service is from 09:00am – 12:00pm. Monday to Friday. A lobby, two preschool rooms, a sleep room, a kitchen and an office are provided on the premises. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises. Parking and set down is available outside the building.

Staffing

The registered provider employs nine childcare staff to work in the service. There were nine adults present on the day of inspection. This included the person in charge, seven staff working directly with the children and a student. The registered provider manages oversight of the service and does not work directly with the children. The person in charge facilitated the inspection.

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,

- Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3) (4) - Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11- Staffing Levels
- Regulation 15 - Record of a Pre-school Child
- Regulation 19(1)(a) - Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child
- Regulation 25 – First Aid
- 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 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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)(b)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise. The person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

Ten staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted;

- (a)
Eleven written validated references were available from a previous employer and
- (b)
Four written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for ten staff members including the registered provider. In respect of all 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 available for two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.
- (4)
Ten staff members, working directly with children attending the service and the registered provider, held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be the equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a) (b)
- One written reference from a past employer in respect of one staff member was not validated.
Four written references in respect of three staff members from a reputable source were not validated.
- (d)
- Police vetting was not available in respect of two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (3)
- The procedures in respect (2)(d) were not carried out by the registered provider/person in charge prior to the employment of staff in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Five written validated references were updated and placed on staff files.
- Police vetting for the two staff members was applied for and returned.
- The registered provider will ensure required validated references and police vetting are on file prior to staff commencing in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Validated references received.
2. Copies of Police vetting received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The Healthy Eating Policy did not provide information on bottle feeding with regard to the storage and administration of powdered infant formula. This posed a risk to the health and welfare of infants who are bottle fed, as staff lacked clear guidance on:

- Food Safety Authority guidance on the preparation of powdered infant formula.
- Hygienic storage of bottles.
- Appropriate heating methods.
- Supervision during feeding.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The Policy on feeding was updated on 29/10/2025 to include the new procedures for bottle preparation/storage/warming and feeding. The Policy states that infant formula must be prepared at home.

Supporting documentation submitted

Updated Healthy Eating Policy received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 10 has been adequately addressed.

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. In the morning on arrival at the service, there were thirty children being supervised directly by six adults. In the afternoon, there were nineteen children being supervised by five adults and the person in charge.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

Morning

- There were two staff providing direct care to nineteen children aged between 3-5 years in the pre school room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to eleven children aged between 1-2 years in the 'Pod 4' room.

Afternoon

- There were five adults providing direct care to nineteen children aged between 1-5 years in the service.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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 sample of twelve records were reviewed by the inspector. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above regulation for the records reviewed.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Basic needs of children

Parents provide the morning snack and lunch for the children; dinner and an afternoon snack were provided by the service. The hot meal was cooked onsite by the registered provider. Dinner served on the day of inspection was potatoes, beans and fish. Children sat together at low tables eating their lunch, staff also sat with the children, engaging in conversation. Babies were supported to feed in low chairs with trays aligned to table height, promoting inclusion by allowing them to engage in mealtimes with the other children. Babies wore bibs to protect their clothes and were supported by staff with feeding if required.

Children attending on a sessional basis were observed to eat their morning snack sitting together at low level tables. Lunches brought in from home included fresh fruit, yoghurt, sandwiches and crackers. Children had individual water bottles, which were accessible in each room throughout the day.

Children were observed to wash their hands after outdoor play and before meal times.

Nappy changing was observed to be timely, and a positive experiences for the children. Staff interacted with the children, telling them they were going to have their nappy changed, and engaged in conversation during the nappy change. Older children were observed to be brought to use the sanitary accommodation by staff when needed.

Sleep practice observed on the day of inspection was child led. Babies in the Pod 4 room slept when they needed and were allowed to sleep as long as they required. Cots and low-level beds were available in the designated sleep room for any child who wished to sleep.

Supporting relationships around children

Staff working with the children were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Babies and younger children were observed to be held and cuddled by staff. Positive interactions with the staff were observed during a dancing activity when staff played music and the children actively engaged and enjoyed participating in energetic dancing and singing with the staff.

Family, birthday and community walls were displayed in the care rooms at child level, helping the children feel connected to home and their wider community. A community book had pictures and information regarding various roles in the children's local community such as the Guards, local hospital and the train station. Each child's photograph and name were displayed above their low-level hooks assigned for their coats and bags. The children's daily routine was displayed in pictures at child's eye level, helping to promote independence and anticipate transitions throughout the day.

Communication with parents was via an online messaging application. More general updates regarding the children's day to day learning and activities were provided at drop off and collection times.

Physical and material environment

Both care rooms were laid out to facilitate free movement with various interest areas throughout. Musical instruments, building blocks, jigsaws, arts/crafts equipment and toy vehicles were positioned on accessible low-level shelving. A tuff tray and aprons were available in the care rooms and provided an opportunity for sensory play and gross motor development. A dress up area, playhouse and kitchen area with toy equipment were available. A designated table with containers of crayons, markers, glue sticks and art equipment were freely accessible to the children who wished to partake in arts and crafts activities. A cosy reading area with a soft rug, vinyl couch and armchair provided a space for children to relax and take a break from activities as they wished. A bookshelf was stocked with books and a storage bench had cosy blankets. Staff were observed to read books to the children in the reading area, and the group were engaged in discussion regarding what Halloween costumes they were planning on wearing.

An enclosed outdoor area provided an opportunity for outdoor play. Children were observed to race around on scooters, trikes and bikes. Colourful sketches covered the ground where children had participated in drawing shapes and pictures with chalk. A slide, playhouse and a wooden climbing frame with a tunnel provided an

opportunity for energetic play. Children enjoyed a sensory activity in the sand trays with shovels, buckets and toy dinosaurs. A retractable awning was positioned on the wall above the external doors into the service and provided shade on sunny days.

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:

Entry to the service was secured and controlled with a bell system. Full length glass doors allowed the staff within to see any visitors arriving to the service. This system prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.

Cleaning products were stored safely in the staff sanitary accommodation out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

Warm water and liquid hand soap were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and after using the bathroom.

Pedal bins were available in each care room and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation.

The care rooms had fridges for the storage of children's lunches and perishable foods.

Cot mattresses were in good condition and had removable covers for washing. Additional blankets and clean sheets were stored on shelves in the sleep room.

Outdoor sand trays were covered with lids at the end of the session, preventing any potential contamination.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely out of reach of the children. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Staff were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. Children aged under 2 years old were provided with a cot while older children slept on low level beds. Sleeping children were observed to be physically

monitored at 10-minute intervals. Staff recorded the time, colour, position and breathing pattern of the sleeping children in a folder in the care room. The sleep room temperature was recorded as 18.1° on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

Fire exits were easily recognisable and unobstructed. The fire assembly point was to the rear of the premises in the outdoor play area.

Outing:

A policy was in place to support outings conducted by the service. Risk assessments were completed and documented for previous outings and viewed on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. It was observed that two children's lunchboxes contained whole grapes, which were not cut in half. This presents a potential choking hazard.
2. Powdered infant formula was observed being reconstituted by a staff member. This practice is not recommended by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland guidance note 22 which states that it is not recommended that child day-care facilities prepare prepared infant formula for the children in their care.
3. A scooter and bike in the outdoor play area were observed to have worn handles with visible rust. This posed a risk of cuts, infection, as well as compromised grip for children using the outdoor play equipment.

Infection Control:

4. The nappy changing practices observed posed a risk of cross contamination as evidenced by the following observations:
 - Single use disposable gloves worn for nappy changes, were not removed at the point that the nappy and used cleaning material were bagged up prior to being disposed of.
 - The staff redressed the child with used gloves on.
 - Children's hands were not washed following nappy changing.
 - The staff member opened up the bin lid with their hands.
 - Staff did wash their hands following the nappy change.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The Healthy Eating Policy was updated on 29/10/2025 to include the cutting up of foods such as grapes.

2. The registered provider has informed parents that bottles of infant formula will no longer be prepared in the service and must be brought to preschool already prepared.
3. The scooter and bike have been disposed of, and staff have been advised to conduct risk assessments on equipment.

Infection Control:

4. The service has reminded all staff of the procedure for nappy changing in line with the guidance from the Health Service Executive.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Updated Healthy Eating Policy received.

Infection Control:

Copy of HSE guidance on nappy changing received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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 staff were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and were available on the premises during the operational hours of the service on 25 September 2025.

(2)(a)
A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the service.

(b)

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

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 fifty-five children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.