

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019CC009
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Name of Service:	Curious Minds
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Address of Service:	Tullylease National School, Tullylease, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P56 6V977
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Sheehy
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	18/05/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	6
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	134 Bank Place, Mallow, Cork. P51 EC59
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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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

Curious Minds Tullylease is an early years service in operation since 2019 offering a choice of full day care, part-time and sessional services. The facility is registered for children aged 2 years to 6 years of age and operating hours are Monday to Friday from 7:15 am until 6:30 pm, 50 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated between the hours of 9.00 am and 12 noon and a school age service is available.

Curious Minds Tullylease operates from a classroom located within Tullylease National School in Tullylease, County Cork. The large room has two children's toilets one of which has a changing unit, a kitchen area, sleep room and an adult toilet located opposite the classroom. The children have access to the outdoor play areas at separate times to the school children.

Staffing

There are two staff currently employed in the service and staff are available from a sister service for additional cover if required. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

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 manager, deputy 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) The registered provider ensured that the service had a designated person in charge and a named person available to deputise.
- (b) The roster confirmed that the designated person and the deputy are on the premises when the pre-school children are in the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure with each adult aware of their role and responsibilities.
- (2) The manager confirmed that there was one new staff member who had commenced employment since the last inspection on 24 February 2022 therefore, the recruitment file for this adult was reviewed. In addition, the staff rosters indicated that an adult from a sister service had covered staff absence on a number of occasions since January 2023, the recruitment file for this adult was also reviewed.
- (a) (b) There were three validated references from past employers and one validated reference from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for both adults.
- (d) International police vetting was not required as documentation on file indicated that neither adult had lived outside the State for a period of six months or longer.
- (3) The procedures carried out in paragraph (2) had been carried out prior to the adults coming into contact with the pre-school children.
- (4) Documentation on file indicated that both adults held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) The staff roster evidenced that the registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the pre-school children who were present in the service.

(2) The adult child ratio was met. There was one full-time, five part-time and four sessional children in attendance with two adults in the morning. In the afternoon, there were six children in attendance with two adults.

(8) The staff roster indicated that there were two adults present while the pre-school children were in the service and both were in the service throughout the inspection.

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

- Twelve records of the pre-school children attending the service were assessed. Each record was found to contain the particulars (a)-(i) above.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that a record was kept in writing of the following information:
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the designated person in charge, deputy and the relief worker.
 - (b) The details of the class of service and the age profile of children were available in the registration documentation for each child.
 - (c) Provision was made on each registration form to record the date the child would cease using the pre-school service.
 - (d) (e) (f) The type of care programme, facilities, opening hours and fees were available in the service brochure available to parents/guardians.
 - (g) The policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain under Regulation 10 were available in the service.
 - (i) Details of the staff rosters from January 2023 were available on the day of inspection.
 - (j) Three records of medication administration were reviewed, these were dated 18/04/2023, 22/03/2023, and 16/03/2023. All were found to contain the relevant particulars including two signatures, one from the staff member administering the medication and the other from the staff member who checked the medication, including details of the medication being administered. The parent's signatures were noted on all three records.

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

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- Children were encouraged to master self-help skills appropriate to their level of development and independence. Examples included putting on trainers to go outdoors, going to the bathroom independently, putting on sun hats and sunglasses and returning crockery and cutlery to the sink.

- Children were encouraged to collect their personal belongings for nappy changing. The staff member was encouraging and positive while engaging the child in a song while carrying out the nappy change.
- A suitable rest area was available in the care room for children who wished to quietly rest away from noisy areas of the room. The area was furnished with rest mats, cushions, blankets, and soft toys. It was decorated with nursery rhymes and children were observed in the area during the inspection.
- Staff interactions with the children were warm and caring. The children's behaviour was managed in a positive manner by staff, with the emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement. An example of this was when a staff member was observed supporting a child to tidy when they were struggling to do this, by discussing why it was important and helping to tidy alongside them.
- All children had room to move freely both indoors and outdoors. Staff could easily supervise as they could see all areas from the open planning of the care room.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- Mealtimes were relaxed with the adults sitting at the table engaging the children in social conversation. Children were given time to eat without being rushed, and all children were supported to actively participate.
- Children's kindnesses and caring attitudes were praised by staff when they observed older children helping younger children in the group with their activities and tasks.
- Staff actively supported the children to engage positively with each other especially with activities that required turn taking. Examples included, younger children waiting to have their sunscreen applied and children waiting outdoors for a turn on a piece of equipment.
- Staff stated that they communicate with parent/guardians mainly through an electronic application, phone and at drop off and collection times. Information exchanged includes details of the child's day including eating, toileting and sleeping.
- Records of regular staff meetings were furnished to the inspector. The dates were recorded as 1 March 2023, 4 April 2023 and 2 May 2023 and included topics such as child development, maintenance, supplies, training and graduation. These were available to view on the electronic application in use in the service.
- The service has contact with local community groups and the local firefighters had been on a recent visit. Photographs of the visit were available for the inspector to view.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- A wide variety of equipment and resources were stored on low-level shelving which was easily accessible by the pre-school children, offering choice and independence.
- A range of books were available in the library which supported children's language and development.
- Tables and chairs were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children attending the service and arranged so that children could sit by themselves or in a group.
- There was a hook for each child to hang their belongings which was identified with a symbol and a name.
- The walls were decorated with themed artwork including pyjamas in washing machines which had been made by the children, ladybirds, and a giant octopus made from paperchains. All artwork was from recent themes from the curriculum planning.
- The outdoor play area created opportunities for children to develop their coordination, balance and movement skills.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Observations linked to Aistear, the curriculum framework, were signed by parents and available on the electronic application, these evidenced the children's learning in the service. They contained photographs of the children's activities which were based on individual needs and the emergent curriculum which was available and furnished to the inspector.
- Children's language development was supported through one-to-one discussion, group discussions, and songs which were observed being sung at circle time including "Good morning" and "Days of the week".
- The children were encouraged to express their views. Each child was given the opportunity at circle time to share their news, which they did enthusiastically.
- Activities were mainly child led and children were observed exercising choice in relation to their engagement in activities and resources.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
 - (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

- (1) There were adequate materials and equipment indoors and outdoors to suit the age and development of the children attending the pre-school service.
- (a) The room was divided into clearly defined areas which provided opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas. Examples of which included, a well-resourced home corner and dressing up rail which provided opportunities for social and emotional development through imaginative play and role play. Arts and crafts were available along with a large, covered sand area with buckets and spades outdoors providing opportunities sensory exploration. The children were engaged when the inspector arrived with pegs and peg boards developing their fine motor skills by placing the pegs onto the boards and making patterns.
- The outdoor area in use on the day was covered in grass. The children had opportunities for gross motor play with the choice of cars, bicycles and scooters available. A large box area with stones was available with large diggers. A mud kitchen was available for imaginary play with long handled ladles, sieves, pots and containers. The children were playing with skittles, and some were running and jumping with their friends while others watered their plants.
- (b) A small sleep room, situated within the care room, which has two stackable beds was available for children who wished to sleep or rest. Individual bedding, cellular blankets and pillows were available for each child. Sleep records were available to evidence that sleep checks are carried out every ten minutes and recorded on an electronic application on a tablet.

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

- The registered provider ensured that suitable, nutritious and varied food was available for each pre-school child. Children staying on for full day care were observed eating a hot lunch consisting of pesto pasta, sausage rolls and fish fingers at 1:00 pm which were heated in the microwave. Morning snack was served at 10.30 am and the children were observed eating healthy and nutritious snacks prepared by the parents/guardians which included filled sandwiches, crackers, cheese, yogurt and a selection of bite sized pieces of fruit. Staff stated a mid-afternoon snack is served at 3:30 pm and the inspector observed that waffles and beans were available in the service, staff stated that these foods are available in the event a child forgets their food. The service provides breakfast including cereals between 8:00 am and 8:45 am. in the morning. Children’s individual water bottles, cutlery and crockery were available at all times.

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 upon arrival. Entry to the building was by an electronic buzzer on the outside of the building, which had a camera enabling staff to see from inside the care room and identify parents/guardians. These measures ensured that no unauthorised adult could enter the building.
- A high release switch allowed adults to exit the main door and prevent children leaving unsupervised.
- The four windows in the classroom were fitted with window restrictors preventing children exiting or falling from them.
- The ramp down to the outdoor play area and carpark was fitted with railings enabling the children to walk safely and independently.
- All equipment in the indoor and outdoor areas appeared in good condition and well maintained.

- All heavy equipment and shelving were secured preventing them from tipping or falling over.
- Flexes and cables were secured out of each of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- Adult coats were inaccessible to the children.
- The perimeter of the outdoor area was secured with high metal fencing. The front entrance of the service was secured with a concrete wall and double gates which were bolted.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed washing their hands before food, after toileting and coming in from playing outdoors. Thermostatically controlled hot water (35°C) was available with children using dispensing soap, drying their hands with paper towels from a dispenser and disposing of the paper towels in pedal operated bins.
- A solution for mouthed toys was available, out of reach of the children.
- Perishable food was noted stored safely in the fridge preventing it from spoiling.
- Staff were observed wearing disposable gloves and aprons when changing the children's nappies. The area was disinfected after use and both the adult and the child washed their hands, following the service's nappy changing procedure.
- Tables were disinfected after use and the floors were swept after food was consumed.
- Cleaning rotas were available on the electronic application, and these were noted to be up to date.
- Windows in the room were open allowing for the circulation of fresh air while maintaining room temperature.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was available and was stored in a separate container from the first aid box.

Fire Safety:

- All fire doors were fitted with thumb twist cylinders aiding the quick evacuation of adults and children in the event of an emergency.
- All firefighting equipment was securely attached to the wall.
- The fire assembly point was visible in the outside carpark a suitable distance from the main building.

Outing:

- The service had recently taken the children on a trip to the library. A comprehensive risk assessment was carried out which was made available to the inspector. Signed letters of consent were available for each child, these formed part of the requirements as outlined in the service's outings policy and procedures.

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 ensured that both the designated person in charge and the named deputy had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The expiry dates of the certificates were dated 17 February 2026 and 22 July 2024.

(2)

(a) (b) The first aid box was visible, easily accessible to the adults in the room and was available at all times.

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) A written record was kept of monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 2 May 2023.

(b) Written records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms. The maintenance certificate for the firefighting equipment was dated March 2023 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 7 February 2023.

(4) Fire drill procedures were located on the wall at the care room fire door.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the pre-school had adequate insurance. The expiry date recorded on the insurance certificate was 27 March 2024. The certificated stated the service is insured for 22 full day care children.