

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019GY001		
Name of Service:	Mary's Preschool		
Address of Service:	St Patrick's National School, Kiltormer, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway		
Eircode:	H53 AH28		
Name of Registered Provider:	Mary McGoldrick		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	28/04/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.		
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel		
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).

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Description of service

Mary's Pre-school is a private early years service in operation since 2019, providing sessional care and education for children aged from 2 to 6 years of age. It is opened from 09:00 to 12 noon, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme operates within these hours.

The service is located in a classroom at the front of Kiltormer National School in east County Galway. There are four toilets; three children's and one adult toilet located in the main hallway near the classroom. A variety of shared outdoor spaces are available including an artificial grass area, large concrete play area, mulch and sensory areas and access to the school pitch.

Staffing

There are four adults working in the service including an adult employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM) and the registered provider.

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.

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

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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

28/04/2026

A referral was made to the fire officer with reference to two doors in use as fire doors; the entrance door to the care room door had no lit signage and no thumb turn lock or push bar mechanism. The second door, identified as the main fire exit door in use by the service, was secured with a key lock and a night latch both posing a safety risk to the children and adults in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes 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*
- (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.*

(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 there was a designated person in charge and a second person was available to deputise if required.
 - (b) Either the person in charge, deputy or named persons were present in the service while the pre-school children were in attendance in the morning.
 - (c) The management structure was detailed in the service. In conversation, the adults in the service were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Recruitment files for all four adults were reviewed.
- (a) Six of the eight required written and validated references were from past employers.
 - (b) The remaining two written and validated references were from sources other than past employers.

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- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all four adults demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) The curricula vitae on file for the four adults working in the service evidenced that no overseas police vetting disclosures were required as none of the adults had resided outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer as adults.
- (4) Certificates were available to evidence that all four adults, working directly with the children, had attained 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.*
- (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) Observation of staff on the day and the staff roster evidenced that there were an adequate number of adults available while the pre-school children were present in the service.
- (3) The adult/child ratios were met.
- There were 19 children aged between 2 years 6 months and 5 years old. There were three adults caring for the children, one of whom was an AIM support worker. In addition, the registered provider was available intermittently and facilitated with the documentation required for the inspection.

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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

Basic needs:

- In line with the service's healthy eating policy the children were observed eating nutritious food at 11:20 which had been prepared by the parents/guardians. Examples included filled sandwiches with ham, rolls, cheese, wraps, bite sized pieces of fruit and rice cakes.
- Staff sat with the children in line with the service's healthy eating policy and the atmosphere was noted to be happy and relaxed. They engaged the children in social conversation and the children chatted with their friends.
- Water was easily accessible from individual water bottles which were placed on a tuff tray.
- Children were escorted to the sanitary area in the hallway by staff who were on hand to provide reminders to flush the toilets and to wash and dry hands.
- Children were observed reading in the rest/quiet area throughout the morning. The area was furnished with a wooden bench with cushions. Age and stage appropriate books were located on the opposite side of the unit, should a child wish to read while resting. Vinyl mats were available for each child to sit on, if required.
- Self-help skills were encouraged by the adults who praised each child's efforts. Examples included children observed returning their toys and equipment to storage areas at tidy up time and zipping up their coats. Staff were nearby to help those who required assistance.
- Staff were observed ensuring the personal needs of the children were met. An example included a staff member closing a window blind when directed by a child who could not see the story book being read as the sun was shining directly into their eyes.

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Supporting Relationships:

- Staff were observed sitting at the children's level on both the floor and at tables, listening intently to their conversations and using strategies to extend their thinking and learning. These included using open ended questions, explanations and providing feedback.
- All children were welcomed to participate in the various curriculum related activities provided throughout the morning. Staff observed inviting children to participate in age and stage related activities.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by staff, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement with staff heard praising children completing their puzzles and assisting their friends in carrying heavy boxes.
- Turn taking and sharing was promoted; the inspector heard a staff member praising a child who was heard offering another child a turn of a toy they were playing with.
- Various methods of communication were stated as being in use to communicate and exchange information with parents/guardians. Examples observed included a messaging application which included photographs of the children, emails and phone calls. Staff were observed talking to parents at drop off in the morning.
- Staff were noted to support each other with the routines of the morning. Weekly meetings were stated as taking place with topics such as planning activities including the teddy bears picnic, Turoe pet farm and the end of term being discussed.
- Staff used timers and verbal prompts to alert children to transitioning to the next activity.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The care room was laid out in clearly defined areas with equipment and toys providing play and learning opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- Children's toys and equipment, which were stored in low boxes and drawers, offered ease of access, promoted choice and encouraged independence.
- Children were observed carrying out activities throughout the morning on suitable age-appropriate tables and chairs. Adult chairs were also available in the care room for the adults caring for the children.
- Children were able to practice their gross motor skills of running, cycling and kicking from physical equipment in the outdoor play area including a tractor and balls. A wooden miniature garda station, post office and shop provided opportunities for imaginary play.

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Planning of activities:

- Observations in scrapbooks, linked to both national frameworks of quality and curriculum, were documented for each child which helped create a complete, well-rounded picture of each child's progress and development. These observations informed the planning for the curriculum with children's emergent curriculum documented including topics such as northern lights, space, planets, artwork and seasonal related activities visible.
- Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling which were observed during the inspection. Examples included a staff member reading stories such as "The Gruffalo" and action games outdoors including "We are going on a bear hunt".
- Children had the opportunity to express their views, take the lead and exercise choice in relation to their engagement in activities and accessing play equipment throughout the morning in both the indoor and outdoor play areas. An example included a child who had the role of being the line leader and who helped giving out the children's snack during mealtime.

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

Fire Safety:

- A fire assembly point was visible on the outdoor wall of the children's play area providing a safe space for the adults and children in the event of a fire.
- In date fire extinguishers, secured by brackets to the walls, were available ensuring they would function correctly in the event of an emergency.

General Safety:

- Window handles were inaccessible to the children preventing children from falling or exiting the care room.
- Handrails were available on the ramp at the entrance to the service providing physical support when entering and exiting the service.
- Toys and equipment in the care room appeared in good condition and were well maintained.
- Heavy equipment and furniture in the care room were anchored to prevent tipping or falling.

Infection Control:

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- Perishable food was stored in the fridge in the service, preventing the food from spoiling.
- Tissues were available for hygiene purposes and children were observed using these to prevent the spread of infection.
- Personal belongings including coats and bags were stored in individual cubby houses, off the floor area in the hallway.
- Handwashing was observed before the serving of food, after toileting and coming in from outdoor play.
- Child friendly handwashing pictures, with words, were visible at the sink in the children's sanitary area providing a visual reminder of the steps for hygienic health practices.
- The wash hand basins in use by the adults and children were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, between 37.4°C and 38.1°C, dispensing soap and dispensing paper towels. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Staff were observed sanitising the tables in the morning and afternoon, before and after the serving of food and sweeping the floor to ensure the areas were kept clean and hygienic.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medication was available in the event of an emergency, it was stored in its original container and the expiry date was recorded as 12/2027.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire Safety:

1. A referral was made to the fire officer with reference to two doors in use as fire doors; the entrance door to the care room door had no lit signage and no thumb turn lock or push bar mechanism. The second door, identified as the main fire exit door in use by the service, was secured with a key lock and a night latch both posing a safety risk to the children and adults if the children and adults had to evacuate the service quickly in the event of an emergency.

General Safety:

The following non-compliances posed a general safety risk to the children;

2. Two gates in the outdoor play areas were accessible by unauthorised adults.
3. A mark making board in the outdoor play area had a broken frame with splinters accessible by the children.
4. The lock on the adult toilet door was broken and the area was accessible by the children.

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- Cleaning agents were accessible in an unlocked cupboard under the sink.

Infection Control:

- Contrary to the service's nappy changing policy an unclean changing mat was observed in the children's sanitary area. In conversation, a staff member stated that children were changed on the mat on the floor, posing a risk of infection.
- Contrary to the service's nappy changing policy no disposable aprons were available in the event a child required nappy changing, which may pose a risk of cross infection.
- There were three full wheelie bins positioned in the rear outdoor play area which were accessible by the children, posing a potential risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire Safety:

- The registered provider stated that they are awaiting a response from the fire officer.

General Safety:

- Secure devices were fitted to both the large metal gate at the front of the service and the gate at the rear of the service on 29/04/2026 to ensure the safety of the children. A risk assessment will be carried out by staff prior to children playing in the outdoor areas to ensure that no unauthorised adults can enter the area while the children are on the premises.
- The damaged mark making board has been removed from the area.
- A secure device has been fitted to the adult toilet to ensure that the children cannot access the area. Staff will check to ensure that the door remains secured while the children are present in the service.
- Cleaning agents have been removed and stored in a secure cupboard out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- A new changing unit and nappy changing mat are now in use.
- Single use disposable aprons are now in place in the sanitary area for use by the adults, if required. Staff will ensure that a new apron is put on prior to each child being changed in order to prevent cross contamination.
- The wheelie bins were moved into the shed which is secured and inaccessible to the children. They have been added to the daily risk assessment which will be checked by staff prior to the children being allowed in the area.

Supporting documentation submitted:

Fire Safety:

- No evidence was submitted by the registered provider.

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General Safety

Photographs and copies of receipts for the following were received in the office of the inspectorate;

2. Photographs of safety devices on both gates were received in the office of the inspectorate on 29/04/2026.
3. A photograph evidencing that the mark making board with the splinters has been removed.
4. A photograph of the hook and eye device on the adult toilet door securing the door to prevent access by the children.
5. A photograph of the cupboard under the sink with the cleaning products removed was received in the office of the inspectorate on 29/04/2026.

Infection Control:

6. A copy of a receipt for the new changing unit was received in the office of the inspectorate on 29/04/2026. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.
7. A photograph of the roll of disposable aprons in the sanitary area.
8. A photograph of the wheelie bins stored in the shed was received in the office of the inspectorate on 29/04/2026.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted and actions taken by the registered provider has addressed 7 of the 8 non-compliances identified. The findings documented at point 1 remain non-compliant as the registered provider did not provide evidence that the non-compliance had been rectified.

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) A certificate was available to evidence that a staff member had First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed. The staff roster indicated that the staff member was available at all times, while the pre-school children were on the premises.

(2)
(a) (b) Two well-stocked first aid boxes, easily accessible to the adults at all times, were available in the care room.

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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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Written records of the fire drills that had taken place in the service were furnished to the inspector. The last dated recorded was noted as 13 April 2026 with previous monthly drills recorded as 11 March and 09 February 2026.
 - (b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting certificate was last serviced on 22 January 2026 and the smoke alarm certificate was last serviced on 09 March 2026.
- (2)
- (c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were available on the premises for review by the inspector.
- (4) The fire action procedure was displayed along with the fire drill at the service 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 the service was insured. Written records of insurance documents were furnished to the inspector which included the following details;

- Contact details of the insurance company
- Name and address of the service
- Number of children for whom the service is insured: 20
- Type of service: Sessional

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- Expiry date of the certificate which was recorded as 27 March 2027.