

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019TY003				
Name of Service:	Muddy Puddles Country Childcare				
Address of Service:	Fantane, Borrisoleigh, Co Tipperary				
Eircode:	E41 C579				
Name of Registered Provider:	Trevor Groome				
Service type:	Full Day				
Date of Inspection:	02/09/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>44</td> <td>PM</td> <td>33</td> </tr> </table>	AM	44	PM	33
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary				
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney and A McNamara				
Title:	Early Years Inspectors				

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	N/A
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Description of service

This full day care service was established in 2019 to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided. The service operates Monday – Friday, 7am – 5.45pm for 50 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour session funded under the early childhood care and education scheme for eligible children which operates from 9 am – 12pm for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from several buildings on the site which was formerly Fantane national school. The service consists of the original school building, which has three activity rooms, two sleep rooms, administration area and sanitary accommodation areas. A modular building at the back of the premises contains two activity rooms and sanitary accommodation. Former sheds and out-buildings have been extended or renovated to provide an activity room, sanitary accommodation and kitchen. A second, single roomed modular building on the site is used by both the early years and school age children for dining and creative arts activities.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service on a daily basis, engaged in a variety of work including cooking, driving the bus and providing relief in the rooms when required. There are 15 staff employed in the service including 13 staff who work directly with the children.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 15(1)(3), 16(1)(3), 19(1)(a), 23, 25 and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of the Preschool Child.

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.

Additional Information

A referral was made to the chief fire officer with regard to internal development works that have been carried out in the main building since the last inspection, to ensure compliance with fire safety legislation. Two new rooms had been built over Muddy and Puddles rooms to create two sleep rooms.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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 was the person in charge on a daily basis and there was a named person who could deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present for the inspection.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that of the 15 staff employed in the service, 2 staff members had been employed since the previous inspection in March 2024. All 15 staff files were reviewed as part of the inspection process.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for each staff member working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources such as previous schools and colleges.

(c) Garda vetting was available on file for each staff member working in the service. Garda vetting had been renewed, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting documentation was available for one staff working in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Staff employed to work with the pre-school children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care of the children.

(2) The adult child ratios during the day of inspection met the requirements of the regulations as follows:

- Junior preschool: 11 children aged between 2 years 9 months and 4 years old cared for by 2 staff.

- Senior pre-school: 18 children aged between 3 and 5 years old cared for by 4 staff.
- Puddles (Babies): 6 children aged between 11 months and 2 years old cared for by 2 staff.
- Muddys (Toddlers): 9 children aged between 22 months and 3 years old cared for by 3 staff.

(4) The adult/child ratio was maintained within the recommended ratios throughout the day.

(8)(a) There were at least 2 staff present in the service while it was in operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

A sample of 12 completed registration forms were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

- (1) The registration forms contained the required information as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.
- (3) The registration forms were available on the premises for inspection by an authorised person.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1)
 - (h) Details of children’s attendance at the service were recorded in the attendance register.
 - (i) Staff working hours were available.
 - (j) Medication administration records were sampled and were found to meet the necessary requirements. Written parental consent for staff to administer medication had also been obtained.
 - (k) A total of 18 accident and incident records were sampled and deemed satisfactory.
- (3) The written records were available on the premises for inspection by an authorised person.

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

(1)(a) The following was observed on the day of inspection through direct observation, review of records and discussions with staff:

Basic needs

The children were provided with food and drinks throughout the day, in line with the planned mealtimes and the weekly menu. Food was prepared on the premises and brought to the children in their rooms. The children had choices around whether they had both vegetables, if they wanted gravy and they could have pasta if they didn't want potatoes.

Children had access to drinking water throughout the day.

The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors and outdoors. Children from the Senior pre-school room benefitted from having access to two activity rooms that they could move freely between to access the activities and materials they wished to engage with. The children from the Junior pre-school room moved to the Senior pre-school rooms in the afternoon, providing them with a change of environment and access to a different range of toys and materials than they used in the mornings.

Supporting relationships

The children benefitted from the very favourable adult to child ratios which enabled each child to receive as much individual attention and support as they needed.

The small group size supported the children to get to know each other well and to develop friendships within the group.

The inspection was carried out one week after the start of the new school year. The group consisted of children who were new to the service and those returning to the service. The children appeared to be settled into the routines of the service and were confident in their exploration and play.

A baby was settling into Puddles room on the day of inspection. The settling -in policy allowed for parents and children to spend time together in the service while they adjusted to the new routine.

The staff met parents each day at drop off and collection times and communicated with them about their child. Staff in the Senior pre-school room were teaching the children Lámh sign language to support all of the children with communication.

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 outdoor play areas were secured to prevent children leaving unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area. The kitchen area was inaccessible to children and situated away from the classrooms. All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to children.

Hot water for hand washing was heated by electric water heaters that were thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C at the sinks used by the children.

Infection control:

The children and staff were observed washing their hands at appropriate times during the day such as before eating and after messy play, using the toilet or nappy changing.

Administration of medication:

The service had a policy on the administration of medication to children. Signed parental consent was sought prior to any medication being given to a child. A medicine record book which had spaces for recording the consent, details of the medication to be given and details of when the medication was administered was available.

Safe sleep:

There was a designated sleep room in the premises for children to sleep during their attendance in the service. Standard cots were provided, which were designated to individual children who required naps during their time spent in the service. A room thermometer was in operation to ensure that the sleep room temperature was maintained within the recommended range. Staff recorded the temperature of the sleep room each time that they carried out the sleeping children's physical checks, colour, position and breathing every 10 minutes, recording the findings on individual children's sleep records.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

1. The vinyl covered seats of two highchairs in Puddles room were split which made them difficult to clean effectively and therefore a potential source of infection.
2. There were no toilet roll holders for the toilet rolls in the sanitary accommodation areas used by the children in the Senior preschool rooms. The toilet rolls were left on top of the cistern or on the sink where they posed a potential risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

1. Highchairs were disposed of and replaced, in future when the seats start to split, the service will dispose of chair immediately.
2. New toilet roll holders in place. The service will ensure that there are toilet roll holders in each toilet.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

Photos of the new highchairs and toilet roll holders were received by the early years inspector on 16 October 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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) There were staff trained in first aid responder (FAR) available to the children attending the service.
- (2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position.
- (b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An in-date insurance certificate was available for inspection to demonstrate that valid insurance was in place.