

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020LH002
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Name of Service:	Miniminds Preschool
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Address of Service:	Park Hall, Coulter Place, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 WP78
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Hoey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	35
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & S. McKenna
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	Not Applicable.
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Description of service

Miniminds Preschool has been registered as an Early Years' service since September 2020. The service provides sessional, part-time, and full day care and education to pre-school children and operates from 8.00am – 6.00pm each weekday. The service currently caters for the care needs of a maximum of 68 pre-school children.

Miniminds Preschool is located in a residential area of Dundalk, Co. Louth. It is a purpose-built premises which consists of 5 operational playrooms; The Red Room and Green Room which are located on the ground floor and The Orange, Yellow and Blue Rooms that are located on the first floor. Ancillary accommodation consists of sanitary facilities, a kitchen area, storage areas and a staff and office area all located on the ground floor.

Additional office and storage areas plus a 2nd sanitary area are also located on the first floor. The children have access to a developed outdoor play area on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and 15 childcare staff work directly with the pre-school children on a daily basis. Three ancillary staff are employed to carry out maintenance, catering, and administrative duties. One additional adult present in the service works directly with the children attending the school aged 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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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

(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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge who is also the registered provider and a named deputy person to deputise as required. The deputy person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.30am. The registered provider arrived on the premises at approximately 11.10am and both were present for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)&(b) Following a discussion with the registered provider and a review of the staff roster, 2 new members of staff are present in the service since the last inspection on 09/09/2024. The staff files for the remaining 18 staff were reviewed at the last inspection and met compliance with this regulation.

The files for 2 new members of staff were available for inspection and reviewed:

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 2 new members of staff. All written references available were validated as required.

- (c)
- A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for the 2 new members of staff.
Garda vetting disclosures were also reviewed for the other 18 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider.
The registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d)
- Following a review of the files for 2 new staff members international police vetting was not required at this time.
One staff file for an existing member of staff was also reviewed, to determine the presence of international police vetting that was outstanding from the last inspection. The required international police vetting was available.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that one new member of staff who works directly with the children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent. The 2nd new member of staff does not work directly with the preschool children so therefore a childcare qualification is not required at this time.
The files for the remaining 15 members of staff who work directly with the preschool school children were reviewed at the last inspection and met compliance with this regulation.

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 10.30am and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Green Room there were 10 children aged 2 - 3 years being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Blue Room there were 16 children aged 3 to 4 years being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Yellow Room there were 6 children aged 4 to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Orange Room there were 6 pre-school children aged 4 to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

Two additional members of staff were present and engaged in administrative and catering duties. The registered provider arrived on the premises at approximately 11.10am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

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:

- (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;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(h) Documentary evidence was available of the daily attendance of each child in the service and included the arrival and departure times of each child. This information was recorded on the services record and communication tablet.

(i) Up to date daily/ weekly staff rosters were available in the service and were reflective of the staff present in the service.

(k) A sample of 4 accident and incident forms were reviewed. The information contained on the forms was complete and included staff, managers and parental signatures.

Non-Compliance Information

(g) The following policy was reviewed and was found not in keeping with the requirements of Regulation 10: The administration of medication policy currently in operation for the service is contradictory and does not provide clear guidelines for the administration of non-prescription medication and temperature reducing medication in the service should it be required in the event of an emergency.

(k) An incident form was not completed for a child attending the Green Room who was observed to receive a slap on the face from another child and was visibly distressed after the incident. Additionally, at collection time the parent was not verbally informed about the incident even though the child was observed to point to their face and refer to the incident when the parent collected them.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Actions

(g) Staff have been updated on our new policy, which has been added to our policies folder for annual review

(k) Staff in the green room have been given time to review our accident and incident reporting procedures. We have reviewed the accident and incident reporting procedures. At our staff meeting, we discussed taking time to slow down and report important information during handover (Minutes attached).

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of updated policy on Medication and first aid.

A copy of medication consent form

A copy of the minutes of a staff meeting which took place on 28/04/2025 and included an update for staff on accident and incident reporting procedures.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 have been adequately addressed.

Implementation of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will require assessment at the next inspection.

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

There were 4 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection for the children attending the early years' service namely; The Green, Blue, Yellow and Orange Rooms. The Red Room was used as a sleep area for the children attending on the day of inspection.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

BASIC NEEDS:

- Healthy eating was promoted in the service as was evident by the dinner and snacks provided by the resident catering staff in the service. Food and snacks were provided at regular intervals throughout the day. Breakfast plus the morning snacks consisted of a selection of fresh fruit, bread rolls, cheese, yoghurts, and toast. Dinner provided on the day was observed to consist of meatballs with vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy. The afternoon snack consisted of a variety of freshly made sandwiches and fresh fruit. Additional portions were provided if the children requested. Staff assisted the children as necessary with their dinner in all care rooms with independence being promoted and encouraged.
- Potable drinking water and milk was available for the children to access in all rooms.
- The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff
- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing and supportive interactions by all staff. For example; *"..good boy...are you going to show the picture to your mammy and daddy?....they are going to love it.."* Where a child became upset in the Orange Room staff were observed to comfort the child, providing reassurances and support to the child.
- The children in the Green Room were observed to experience a change of environment to the outdoors in the afternoon.

Supporting Relationships

- The staff when questioned stated that they use an electronic interactive communication system to record and share information about the children's daily activities and care needs with parents. Pictures of activities, games, curriculum plans, and the children's learning journey are also shared through this 'app'. Partnership with parents is also supported through verbal communication at drop off and collection, social media and email. The staff have a communication group where they share information through a messaging service. The staff also report regular staff meetings in the service.
- A key worker system was in place throughout the service and the names of the children, and their key worker was on display in the care rooms. The staff when questioned were familiar with their allocated key children and this promoted the development and sustainment of relationships between the children, their parents, and the staff in the service.

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children in all care rooms. For example, “*Good girl.... We use our quiet voices.... That’s right we share with our friends.... Good boy, well done*”.

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-

(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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016,

Compliance Information

(1)(b) A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft seating, mats and cushions provided, should a child need to rest or take a break from activities during the day. A number of individual day beds suitable for children aged over 2 years were available.

(2)(a) A large spacious outdoor area was available on the premises and is subdivided into a variety of interest areas that supported all areas of development:

Area 1 is a large spacious area located to the rear of the premises. A variety of surfaces are available including a concrete surface which the children were observed to use ride on trikes, cars, scooters and tractors. A safety surface, artificial grass area and planted areas with bark mulch were provided and included a variety of toys and equipment for the children to access. A number of specifically developed interest areas included; a mud kitchen and supporting play equipment, a number of large tyre sand pits with play equipment and a variety of dolls buggies and rockers. A large climbing frame was present with a slide, a playhouse, climbing wall and steps and a number of swing seats. A partially covered area was provided for use in all types of weather.

Area 2 is located to the rear of the premises and is directly outside the Green Room. This area has a concrete and safety surface which is fully fenced and gated and has a partially covered area. There is a tyre sandpit, home area with play kitchen, seating area with soft seats and ‘egg chair’ and wall mounted blackboard and musical wall. A small age-appropriate climbing frame to encourage gross motor development for the younger children is also available.

Area 3 is the “well-being” garden and is located to the front of the premises. The area is gated and fenced and has a variety of planted tyres, pallets and boots. A supply of age-appropriate gardening equipment and clay is also

available for the children to access. A number of seated areas and picnic tables are provided, and a variety of painted bird houses are also in the area.

Area 4: is located to the front of the building beside the “wellbeing garden”. It was walled and gated and contained ‘egg chairs’, a wooden house with seat, a wooden balance beam and balance steps, a mud kitchen and a tyre sand pit.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that all reasonable measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a preschool child in relation to the following:

General Safety:

The following potential injury and safety risks were identified by the inspectors during the course of the inspection. When the inspectors reviewed the risk assessment documents for the each of the care rooms, these were found either not completed or did not identify the risks:

1. Garda vetting was available for 20 staff members including the registered provider. However, 1 of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice ‘EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting’.
2. The blind cords in the service were not appropriately restricted and were therefore potentially accessible to the children, e.g. In the Green room, and on the low-level windows on the stairway
3. A free-standing unsecured television was located on a low-level shelf in the Green Room. This is a potential impact or injury hazard if pushed or pulled by a child.
4. Electrical cords from an air conditioning unit in the Blue Room was not securely fixed to reduce the risk of injury to a child.
5. The sink in the play kitchen unit in the Orange Room was broken and had a sharp edge, posing a risk of injury to a child.
6. There was a sterilising solution in a cupboard under the sink in the Yellow Room, which poses a risk of harm to a child. A locking device was available but not in use.
7. The hot tap in the single toilet cubicle in the upstairs sanitary area was loose and poses difficulty to children to use.

Infection Control:

The following cross infection risks were observed:

8. Following a nappy changing procedure one staff member was observed wearing the 'used' gloves to clean down the mat after the procedure and also to assist the child with hand washing and to give them paper hand towels to dry their hands.
9. The children's snacks which were provided by parents, contained perishable items and were inappropriately stored in the children's bags in the hallway and not in a refrigerator at the recommended storage of 5°C or below.

Administration of Medication:

10. Documented parental consent was not available for all children attending the service for the administration of temperature reducing medication should it be required in the event of an emergency.

Safe Sleep:

11. A staff member was not present at all times in the Red Room to provide constant supervision, where three children were sleeping on a bed at sleep time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. The staff members vetting has been renewed. (see attached) When staff move from permanent to relief, the registered provider will ensure they remain on our vetting renewal list. (renewal list attached, and a copy is placed on the wall beside the manager's desk)
2. All blind cords are now secure, Due to damage to some cords, a local company has been booked to have all cords replaced and secured in a more permanent way.
3. The TV has been placed on a bracket and fitted to the wall. (Photo attached Staff have been briefed on the importance of health and safety in the room. Daily risk assessment has been updated.
4. Air conditioning units are mobile. Cords have been secured with cable ties and moved the unit to an area where the cords are hidden. Staff have been briefed on the importance of health and safety in the room. Daily risk assessment has been updated to include Air conditioning units in all classrooms
5. The sink has been removed. Staff have been reminded of the importance of checking all toys and equipment during daily risk assessments
6. Staff have been asked to keep all cleaning materials in the storeroom located in the hallway, which children have no access to

7. Tap has been repaired. Weekly checks of all bathrooms sinks and taps have been added to our bathroom risk assessment
8. Our nappy changing policy was reviewed with each staff member (evidence attached). Each staff member signed off on our nappy changing policy and the required steps. Visual reminders have been updated and placed in a more prominent position above each changing station.
9. A fridge has been added to the green room for the children's lunches and a refrigeration policy for all perishables has been implemented.
10. A new medication policy has been implemented and includes the administration of temperature reducing medication. A medication consent has been requested from all parents via our parents' app. A new medication consent form has been added to our parent's app, and this will automatically be issued to all new parents.
11. The service's sleep policy has been updated to include supervision at all times. When children are asleep a staff member will remain in the room at all times. Staff have been updated on supervision during sleep time. This was addressed during a full staff meeting (attached)

Supporting documentation submitted

- Evidence of updated Garda vetting disclosure for 1 staff member.
- A copy of the minutes of a staff meeting which took place on 28/04/2025 and included an update for staff on supervision during sleep time.
- A copy of medication consent form.
- A copy of updated policy on Medication and first aid.
- Photographic evidence of wall mounted television, and AC units.
- Updated risk assessment documents.
- Evidence of Nappy changing policy review.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will require assessment at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence was available to confirm that up-to-date insurance cover was available for a maximum of 68 preschool children to attend the service on a full day care basis. The policy commenced on 28/03/2025.