

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2022LS001				
<b>Name of Service:</b>	The Hive at Maples Early Years				
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Unit 4, Kea Lew Business Park, Portlaoise, Co. Laois				
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 KH7Y				
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Monica Delaney				
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional				
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	18/06/2025				
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>27</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	27	PM	N/A
AM	27	PM	N/A		

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Flynn
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector

**Authority to Inspect**

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

### Description of service

The Hive at Maples Early Years is a private sessional service for children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 09:30 and 12:30 on a Monday to Friday basis, participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service includes an entrance hall, two pre-school rooms, a toddler room, a breakout room, a kitchen, an office and an afterschool room. The Early Years' Service is located in an industrial estate in the town of Portlaoise, County Laois. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available to the front of the property.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs five adults in the service. On 18 June 2025 four adults were working directly with children. The person in charge was not present or rostered to be on duty. An additional rostered staff member came on duty during the inspection. The registered provider does not work directly with the children and was not present during the inspection. The registered provider attended the closing meeting which was held over the phone after the inspection.

### Methodology

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

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

The findings on inspection are based on:

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

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under;

- Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4)
- Regulation 11– Staffing Levels (1)(3)
- Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(a)
- Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play (1)(a)(b) (4)
- Regulation 25 - First Aid
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures (1) (a) (b), (4)
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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

An immediate action notice in respect of Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child was issued to the registered provider on 18 June 2025. The response submitted by the registered provider on the 19 June 2025 mitigated the risk and was accepted by the inspectorate. See body of report for details.

### Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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)

There was a designated person in charge and a person to deputise as required.

(b)

The deputy person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

Six staff files were reviewed. The following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers or from a source other than a previous employer in respect of the six staff members.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the six staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available for one staff member who had lived outside of the state for a period longer than six months.

(4)

The six staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 6 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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(3)

There were twenty-seven children attending the service being supervised directly by five adults.

There was one adult providing direct care to ten children aged from 3-5 years in pre-school room 1.

There was one adult providing direct care to eight children aged from 3-5 years in pre-school room 2.

There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged from 2-3 years in the toddler room.

An additional staff member came on duty at 11:00.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

*(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*

*(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The children in the toddler room were observed to be enjoying free play with the toys and equipment available such as blocks and trucks. A staff member was reading to children on the floor mat in the corner. The children in the toddler room had clear floor space available to move freely and choose toys from the low-level shelves. Aprons were available to the children for messy play activities. A staff member in the toddler room demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. Staff members were observed to communicate positively with the young children using soft and gentle tones, offered reassurance and promptly comforted a child when they became upset.

Children in preschool room one and two, had a choice of interest areas which included a small world house, messy play area, reading corners with low level shelving containing books, a black board and an art and crafts area. The children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage with. The environment in preschool room one and two, was laid out to support the children's independence. Areas were supplemented with kitchen and construction equipment, blocks, manipulative and connective bricks and dress up materials. The pre-school rooms had a range of play-based materials and equipment that offered stimulation, exploration, and imagination. These were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play and movement.

Staff supported the children to wash their hands before snack time and when required throughout the session. Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents at 11:00. Children ate together at low level tables. Lunches included sandwiches, crackers and fruit. Children had their own drink bottles. The inspector observed children who did not eat their snack were provided with an alternative such as fruit from the onsite kitchen. Children were encouraged to feed themselves and staff supported younger children who needed assistance with their snack.

After snack time, all children went out to play in the outdoor area. The day of the inspection was very sunny, staff ensured the children wore sun hats during outdoor play. Children were observed playing on the wooden climbing frame, on the swings and riding the trikes under the support and supervision of the staff members.

Staff communicated with parents at drop off and collection times, and via an electronic messaging application.

## Non-Compliance Information

(19 (a))

1. Children in the Toddler room did not have free access to a drink. Drinks bottles were stored in their bags on hooks in the hallway. Water jugs were observed in the preschool rooms but were empty.
2. Two bookshelves with books in the toddler room were not visible or accessible to the children due to being positioned too high up on the wall.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Children's bags are now being stored in the care room with their drink bottles for easy access to a drink throughout the session.
2. Accessible bookshelves have been placed in the toddler room.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph evidence received.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 19 has been adequately addressed.

### 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.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a)

Play equipment was provided which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and home corners in the pre-school rooms.

(b)

Soft furnishings including a vinyl sofas and ring cushions, providing the rest facilities in the pre-school rooms.

(4)

A fully enclosed outdoor play area was located to the side of the premises. The outdoor play area was secured by a high-level wall and large metal gate surrounding the perimeter.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(4)

1. Refuse bins located in the outdoor play area accessible to the children and were not secured or stored separately. Concrete blocks were placed on top of the bins which posed a potential injury risk to children if the concrete blocks moved or fell from the top of the refuse bins.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The refuse bins are no longer located in the outdoor play area and have been relocated to the side of the property.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph received.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective action taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 20 has been adequately addressed.

## 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

#### General Safety:

1. The main entrance door to the service was found open and unsecured by the inspector on arrival at the premises. The inspector walked into the service unnoticed. The inspector walked into a care room seeking the attention of the person in charge. This created a risk for unauthorised persons to gain entry to the service with full access to all areas of the building. There was also the risk that children could exit the service. An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider on the 18 June 2025.
2. An appropriate internal communication system was not in place for staff working alone in rooms to summon assistance from other staff members or service management in the event of an emergency or when additional room cover was required or children required safe access to the sanitary accommodation located in the corridor. Staff were observed to call for the attention of other staff members however, the other staff members could not hear as the care room doors were closed.
3. Cleaning products were stored in pre school room 2 near the sinks and were accessible to children which posed a potential risk of harm.

#### Infection Control:

4. In the toddler room staff were observed to open the lid of the bin with their hands when disposing of waste. A foot operated pedal bin was not available for the hygienic disposal of waste.
5. Wall mounted dispensers for paper hand towel were not in place in the pre-school rooms. Paper towels for hand washing were stored in a pile on top of the fridge and on top of a toy kitchen. Staff were observed to hand the paper towels to the children when drying their hands which was inadequate for infection control purposes.

6. Perishable items such as yoghurts contained within the children's lunchboxes were not refrigerated.

**Outing:**

7. Documented risk assessments relating to outings from the service that had previously occurred were not in place to support practice and ensure the safety of the children. The inspector was informed that the children are brought on outings weekly to the adjacent basketball court which is located outside the service across a car park.

**Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

**Corrective & Preventive Action**

**General Safety:**

1. The entrance door to the service was closed immediately. Staff have been reminded to ensure the entrance door is closed at all times after anyone enters the service.
2. Doorbells have been installed in all care rooms in order for staff to ring for assistance if needed.
3. Cleaning products are being stored in a new location out of reach of children.

**Infection Control:**

4. Pedal bins have been placed in all rooms.
5. Paper towel dispensers have been placed in the rooms for hygienic hand washing and drying.
6. A fridge has been placed in the toddler room for the safe storage of perishable foods.

**Outing:**

7. An outing policy and risk assessment has been implemented for outings.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

Photograph of the new doorbell system and the shelf storing cleaning products out of reach of children was received.

**Infection Control:**

Photographs of new pedal bins, paper towel dispensers and fridge in the care room have been received.

**Outing:**

The updated outing policy and risk assessment has been viewed.

**Summary Comment**

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

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 25 - First aid

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*

*(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*

*(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

### Compliance Information

(1)

Three staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR). Two staff were available on the premises during the operational hours of the service on 18 June 2025.

(2)(a)

Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located in the pre-school rooms and office.

(b)

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

## 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 for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 03 June 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in February 2025.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were noted in a conspicuous location in the hall way of the premises.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 84 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.