

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023WD001
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Name of Service:	The Three Little Bears
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Address of Service:	Cruachan, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X35 HR20
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mairead Barry
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	10/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Building Cork Road Waterford City
Inspection undertaken by:	Aileen Bradshaw
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

The Three Little Bears is a privately owned service based in a residential area outside Dungarvan town. There are two care rooms with two adjacent sleep rooms, sanitary facilities, kitchen, and a staff room. There is an outdoor area to the rear and side of the building. The service is registered to care for up to 23 children aged from 1 to 3 years old, Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 17:00.

Staffing

There are five staff, including the registered provider, employed in the service. On the day of the inspection, there were 3 staff caring for 17 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 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.

Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 15 – Record of a Pre-School Child;

Regulation 16 – Record in Relation to Pre-School Service;

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play;

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child;

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Regulation 24 - Checking In and Out and Records of Attendance;

Regulation 25 – First Aid;

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures;

Regulation 29 - Premises.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record of a Pre-School Child and

Regulation 16 – Record in Relation to a Pre-School Service.

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 Fire Officer on the 16 April 2026 to seek advice on fire safety.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Statutory Notices		
Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN 1401	10/04/2026	Fire safety in the service was inadequate. In the larger cot room, one cot was placed in front of the fire exit
Status	Action was taken by person in charge immediately following service of the notice and the registered provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventative actions which were acceptable to the inspectorate.	
Improvement Notice IN 1402	10/04/2026	Fire safety in the service was inadequate as two staff members confirmed fire drills had not been carried out this year, and they had one last year. There was no record of fire drills available on the day.
Status	Action was taken by person in charge immediately following service of the notice and the registered provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventative actions which were acceptable to the inspectorate	

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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

(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-

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

(b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and

(c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

(9)

(1)(a) On the day of inspection, the registered provider was not available however the person in charge was on the premises throughout the day.

Staff confirmed that there were no new or additional staff employed since the last inspection in February 2025.

(2)(c) The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years and current Garda vetting was available for all five staff.

(7) Though discussion with staff and a review of documents available, evidence demonstrated that the registered provider supervised and supported the staff team. Staff described how they had regular supervision and appraisal meetings with the registered provider. Evidence was available to demonstrate that monthly staff meetings were held, and staff participated in regular continuous personal development (CPD) with national agencies, for example the local county childcare committee, Tusla and Barnardo's.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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.

Compliance Information

The correct adult/child ratio was maintained during the inspection. At 10:25 there were 3 staff caring for 16 children. On review of the staff and children's attendance records, it was evident that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

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

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

Compliance Information

The registration forms for 12 children were reviewed, and all the required information was included in these forms.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

Information required under this regulation was available in the staff files, the service's statement of function, policies and purpose and in the records reviewed on the day

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

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

Compliance Information

The Toddler room was laid out with various area of interest, for example a home corner, tool bench with construction toys, and large floor toys. The tabletop activities were displayed on low shelving accessible to children. There were floor mats for the train sets and cars and push along toys. The children and staff were observed to use the large soft mat to sit together to read stories with additional cushions available for extra comfort if required.

The outdoor area was grassed with a mud kitchen and climbing equipment. The weather was inclement on the day of the inspection, but the staff described how the children love spending time outdoors

Non-Compliance Information

- (a) The lack of a designed environment impacted on the experiences and care of the children attending in the Wobbler room. There was a limited amount of play materials in the children's space, for example there was a rocking toy, an activity bench and a play bus in the room for the children. The toys were stored on high shelving in the room which was out of reach for the children.
- (b) There was no cosy area in the Wobbler room where children could access if they require time away from the main play area to rest or take a break.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that the room layout has been reviewed and it now caters for the children attending the facility. The room leaders will be responsible for them monitoring of the room layout.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted.

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Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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:

- On arrival, the entrance was secured to prevent unsupervised access or exit from the building.
- A weekly roster was available for review by the inspectors. Staff explained how the current roster was temporary as a staff member was out on leave.
- Children's attendance was recorded in a timely manner and included notes if a child was not in attendance due to illness or an appointment.
- Cleaning products were stored out of reach from the children.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to wash their hand before eating.
- Warm water and soap were available to support effective hand washing.
- Up to date cleaning checklist was displayed in the service.

Safe Sleep:

- The sleep room temperature was maintained at 20.1°C while children were sleeping.
- The room was darkened and white noise was playing to support the children's sleeping requirements.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. While it is acknowledged that children's soothers in the sleep room were stored appropriately, three children's soothers were kept loosely in their labelled baskets in the Wobbler room. This created a risk of cross-infection, and this was a non-compliance on the last inspection in February 2025.

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Infection Control:

- The nappy disposable bin was soiled and was not a pedal bin as per the requirements of the Early Years Regulatory notice - Use of nappy storage and disposal bins in Early Years Services.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep checks were not recorded consistently, for example, there were no records of children's sleep in the Wobbler room since the 8 of April and for the Toddler room since 1 April. This was a previous non-compliance at the last inspection in February 2025.

Fire Safety:

- See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN1401 served.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The registered provider stated that soothers are now stored in individual labelled containers and staff have been reminded to keep them in the correct containers.

Infection Control:

- The registered provider stated that a new pedal bin has been purchased and staff have been reminded to ensure it is cleaned promptly.

Safe Sleep:

- The registered provider stated that the staff have been reminded to note the children's sleep records consistently and the room leaders will be responsible for conducting spot checks to ensure this is the case.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence was submitted.

Infection Control:

- No evidence was submitted.

Safe Sleep:

- Photographic evidence was submitted

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) no person other than-
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,
 - (iii) an employee, or
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- A record of the children's attendance was maintained during the inspection. Staff members in the room were observed to record children arriving and leaving the service in a timely manner.
- (3)(a)
- On the inspector's arrival the main door into the service was secured. The staff monitored the door through a side window of the Wobbler room who was collecting or dropping the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (3)(b)
- On the inspector's arrival to the service, there was no requirement to sign in and through discussion with the person in charge they confirmed there was no visitors record book and no previous requirement for a record of visitors.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated they have developed a visitors sign in sheet which will be located at the entrance and the manager will ensure each visitor will sign in on arrival.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted.

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Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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 had up to date training as First Aid Responders and on a review of the staff roster there was evidence that the registered provider ensured there was a person trained in first aid available to the children at all times.
- (2) Two first aid boxes were stored on accessible shelving in the Toddler room and the kitchen.

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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 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)(b) On a review of records, the firefighting equipment was serviced in February 2026, and the smoke alarms were serviced on 9 March 2026.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN1402 served
- (4) There were no fire procedures notices displayed in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

4. The registered provider stated the fire evacuation procedures have been displayed in the service and all staff have been made aware of same. A monthly fire drill is scheduled and children are aware of the required procedures.

Supporting documentation submitted

4. No evidence was submitted.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.*

Non-Compliance Information

There was no toilet seat in one of the two children's toilets – this was a previous non-compliance in February 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that they are currently in the process of locating a new toilet seat and it will be installed once purchased.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has not addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection. The non-compliance remains outstanding as the registered provider has not yet procured the item indicated in the corrective actions. This will be assessed again on next inspection.