

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023WD002		
Name of Service:	Kids at Play		
Address of Service:	Carn Glas Court, Waterford City, Co. Waterford		
Eircode:	X91 W0VF		
Name of Registered Provider:	Aoife Lynch		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	12/03/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Building, Cork Road, Waterford City.		
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw C. Ryan		
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

Kids at Play is located in an adapted unit on the ground floor of a residential apartment block on the outskirts of Waterford City. The service is registered to care for up to 11 children aged 3 to 6 years. The operational hours are from 09:00 to 18:00, and children attend for up to 3.5 hours each day.

The building has two care rooms, a hallway, a sanitary area, an office, and the outdoor play space is adjacent to the service and is accessible from the main care room.

The service also offers school-age care.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and manager of the service and currently employs nine additional childcare staff for the pre-school. On the day of the inspection a student was on work placement.

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.

Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 15 - Record of a Pre-School Child;

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare, and development of Child;

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Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials;

Regulation 22 - Food and Drink;

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of 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.

Acknowledgments

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

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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,*
- (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.

(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.*

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Compliance Information

- (9)
- (1)(a)(b)(c) The service had a designated person in charge and a person to deputise if required. There was a clear management structure with the staff names and positions displayed in the service.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection findings, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection and a student was completing their educational work placement programme. A total of three files were reviewed.
- (a)(b) The required validated references were available to the inspector.
- (c) Garda vetting was available. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Documents reviewed demonstrated that police vetting was not required for the staff members.
- (4)
- On review of the files, evidence was available to demonstrate that all staff working with preschool children had achieved 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.
- (7)
- The registered provider evidenced support and supervision of staff on an ongoing basis. They described how they hold regular staff team meetings, planned training days and have one to one monthly meetings with staff. Documents reviewed by the inspector demonstrated the team meetings held in January 2026 included discussions regarding the focus areas for the coming year and the practice commitments of the team. The one-to-one meeting included personal reflections, continuous professional development (CPD) and staff wellbeing. Staff described how they have engaged in CPD, where either the registered provider has sourced for them, or they have requested to attend.

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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)(3)

During the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children. There were 5 staff caring directly for 10 preschool children. The registered provider and person in charge were observed to support staff and children where required during the day.

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.*

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- A sample of children's enrolment forms completed by the parents were reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

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
 - (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The inspectors observed the following:

On arrival the inspectors observed the children to be engaged and playing with the materials and equipment available to them. In room 1, the staff had arranged two activities – a large activity tray with oatmeal spread out on it. Children were observed to have tubs, and little construction toys in the tray, they were pouring and scooping the oatmeal. The second activity tray had ice cubes, some with plastic blocks frozen in the cubes. There were toy characters from the movie 'Frozen' in the tray. Staff were observed to sit with the children and engage them in play. A staff member noticed that a child's interest in the ice play had changed and added bowls, tubs, and spoons to facilitate the child to extend their experience. Staff set up play stations around the room and children moved between these during the morning. The management described how the 'play stations' are set up to reflect the children interests and development needs. The daily routine was flexible, and staff allowed the children the space to freely play with what they wished too without interruption. The staff were familiar with the children's individual likes, dislikes, and routines. Staff discussed with the inspector how they set goals, curriculums and conduct progress reviews on the children during the year.

Staff showed respect toward the children, for example, explained they had five minutes before they needed to swap rooms to allow their friends to play with the oatmeal and ice tray. They reminded the children again with

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three minutes to go and set a timer to allow an alarm beep. The transition to the bigger room was managed effectively as the children been given time and were aware of the change in their activity.

Staff were observed to communicate with each other as the morning progressed. As the weather was particularly windy the deputy person in charge discussed a change of the plan with the staff as the children would not be going outdoors. The children were informed of this change, and one child said it was 'better not to go out as the playhouse blown away.'

Staff engaged with the children's play – a child was play feeding a staff member oatmeal and told them they were mama bear and the staff asked the child if they were baby bear or Goldilocks. This make-believe play continued and a second child joined in.

Staff members managed disagreements in a positive and gentle manner. Staff were observed to invite a child involved in a dispute to join them at the ice tray, while a second staff calmed the upset child. Both staff were observed to chat to the children about sharing and said it's not nice to make your friend sad and it would make them happy if everyone was friends in the room. The staff spoke kindly with the children "remember we do this" and disputes were dispelled.

Members of the management team were observed to offer support to the staff in the rooms. A child was observed to be uneasy about moving to a different room, so a member of the management team gently encouraged them to 'try it out' and chatted as they held hands. They introduced them to the ice activity and stayed with them until they were engrossed and then quietly left the room.

There was adequate staff in the rooms to allow unhurried conversation with parents at collection time. Staff were observed checking in with each other if they had to step out of the room to give parents and handover at the end of the morning.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The children had the use of two care rooms with a large wide hallway which the staff described as a space they can use if a child need time away from group play and one to one with a staff member. This space also had each child's individual cubby holes to store their bags and personal belongings. The smaller room (room 1) was used for planned activities at the tables. Staff access the stored equipment, as required, to set up these stations. Room 1 was furnished with low tables and chairs and a low sink which children could accessed on the day for water play. In room 2 there was a small trampoline, soft matting on the floor, a climbing bar, a soft sofa, cars, garage, dolls house and home corner. Children's individual art was displayed in both rooms.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Parents provided the snacks for the children during the day. Snacks were noted to include bananas, apples, brioche rolls and yogurts. The services healthy eating policy sets out guidelines for healthy snacks however they also acknowledged that some children may have preferences to tastes and textures and the main priority was that children eat during the morning.

Staff were observed to offer help to children if required however they encouraged children to be independent, getting their bags from the cubbies and opening their own lunch boxes. Staff positioned themselves at the table, which supported the children in creating a sociable occasion.

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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 entry to the service was secured and managed with an electronic doorbell system and turnkey lock mechanisms. This managed unauthorised entry or exit from the building.

Children and staffs' attendance was recorded in a timely manner.

Staff were observed to mop any melted ice cubes and reminded children that the wet floor might be slippery.

The mat on the ramp to the outdoor area was secured to the concrete.

All cleaning equipment and materials were safely locked away from the children's access.

Inspectors were required to sign in and out of the premises during the day. It was evident that previous visitors were also required to do so.

Infection Control:

Perishable lunch items were stored in the fridge.

Liquid soap and disposable paper towels were available for handwashing.