

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2023WD002			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Kids at Play			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Carn Glas Court, Waterford City, Co. Waterford			
<b>Eircode:</b>	X91 W0VF			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Aoife Lynch			
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional			
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	25/08/2025			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	6	PM	6
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Community Care Centre, HSE Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford City			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	A. Bradshaw N. Thornton			
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors			
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>				
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).				
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable			

### Description of service

Kids at Play is located in an adapted unit in 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 employs nine staff members, of whom six work directly with the pre-school children.

The staff working with the preschool children held the minimum QQI Quality Qualifications Ireland level 5 qualification in Childcare and Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework.

The registered provider does not 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of Child;  
Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child;  
Regulation 25 – First Aid;  
Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures;  
Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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.

### 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)(b)

The registered provider was present for a short time on the inspector's arrival. Two managers were available to the inspectors throughout the day. Documents reviewed on the day demonstrated that a person in charge is present in the service at all times.

(2)

Through discussion with the manager and a review of the staff rosters, it was confirmed that there were four new staff members since the last inspection. These four staff files were reviewed.

(a)(b)

There were validated references for all employees available for review.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.

(d)

Police vetting disclosures were available on file for staff members who had worked or lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

On review of the staff 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.

### 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

(3) On the day of inspection, two adults were working directly with six pre-school children. The two managers were available to the inspectors during the day. Three additional staff were caring for the school-age children, and two staff were on annual leave.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1) The adult-to-child ratio was observed to be compliant; however, due to the nature of the children's additional needs, extra staff support was required. In the morning, the two staff members present with the six preschool children were observed spending time comforting and reassuring the children as they transitioned from the large classroom to the outdoor play area. It is acknowledged that when a third staff member arrived at 11:45 to assist, more opportunities were presented for engaging in play with the children. However, this extra support was not always available.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that management, while performing administrative duties do also work directly with the children daily. Going forward, the staff team will organise the children in groups to increase the number of staff available to the children.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

The register provider referred back to the roster that the inspectors reviewed on the day of the inspection.

### Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider are suitable to address the non-compliance identified on 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*

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

*(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

Staff were observed taking time outside of the care rooms to chat with parents and provide them with a verbal report on how their child's day went. The manager explained that, in addition to parental communication through the digital application, staff endeavour to meet with parents each day to discuss the day.

The manager discussed the children's settling-in policy and the 'communication passport' that each family complete with information online, which will support the children on their arrival to the service, for example, the names of the family members, family pets, favourite toys, and television characters. Inspectors observed that the preschool children transitioned between the large classroom for physical activities, the small classroom for tabletop activities, and the outdoor play area during the inspection.

A rest area with a couch and soft circular cushions had been developed since the last inspection. A staff member sat with a child on the couch, looking at the provided books, while another staff member comforted a child who was visibly upset. Staff spoke gently and calmly, reassuring children and calming them. Staff complimented children on their artwork, saying, “This is beautiful” and “good work”.

There was also a kitchen area and several storage units positioned on soft matting, three children-sized cocoon-designed plastic chairs, as well as a circular table and chairs for table activities.

In the outdoor play area, interest areas such as the small slide, sand tray and building block pit engaged children in play. Children soothed themselves by swinging the swing hammock provided.

In the small classroom, children sat and ate their snacks, which were observed to consist of sandwiches, yoghurt, vegetable crudites, fruit, soft cheeses, and breadsticks. Water was also provided.

After snack time, at 12:40, children participated in tabletop activities that included jigsaw puzzles, block building, and sensory play.

Small visual prompt cards were available for staff to use, enhancing communication with children about their preferences and preparing them for transitions between activities.

### Non-Compliance Information

1. Other than the rest and reading area in the large classroom, there were no other defined areas of interest and play materials and resources were limited and unorganised.
2. Children’s ability to engage in play was restricted by staff practices regarding the provision of play materials and supervision of play. Two children were observed to show interest and enjoyment in playing with sand; however, the sandbox was supplied with only a thin layer of sand, restricting their ability to play. Staff explained that they had reduced the amount of sand available as children had tried to eat it.
3. While it is acknowledged that the windows in the service were open to the capacity allowed, the inspectors observed that the overall temperature of the physical environment in the service was not maintained within the comfortable recommended limits of 18°C to 22°C. Temperatures recorded in the service varied between 22.7°C to 24°C in the large classroom, 25.3°C to 26°C in the small classroom, and 23.1°C to 25.6°C in the toilet.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider stated that due to the nature of the children they work with, they have made the decision not to divide the room into centres/corners. They stated they did try this after a previous non-compliance in this area, as evidenced in the last report, but found that it did not aid the children’s

experience of play. As an alternative, they will create play stations throughout the day.

These stations include mark-making, imaginative/role play, reading and relaxation and construction. The registered provider stated that a team meeting was held following the inspection to discuss the importance of consistency in care and adherence to care plans. Going forward, a manager will conduct unannounced room observations fortnightly and work with the staff team. In addition, a training day has been booked for the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2026.

2. The registered provider stated that during a team meeting, a discussion was held about the importance of using the methods which are available to the team and the children, which enable choice making. Staff were asked to complete a reflective exercise to gauge the children's abilities and to see what the child enjoys doing to pre-empt their wishes. The aim is for this exercise to be repeated every 8 weeks. The registered provider stated whiteboards will be used to share areas of special interest or enjoyment for the individual children – in this way, the staff can share their personal knowledge and understanding easily with the whole team. In addition, the amount of equipment and toys available to the children had increased.
3. The registered provider stated that they now have an increased awareness of the building temperature and they have set up an alarm system on an online application. The open/ close procedures now include the of running mobile extractor fans to manage temperatures.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

1. Photographic evidence was submitted.
2. Photographic evidence was submitted.
3. Photographic evidence and a copy of the amended procedures were submitted.

### **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:

The service's main entrance was located at the back of the premises, where a limited number of car parking spaces were also provided. A second fire exit door, located at the front of the building, was used by the staff and children to transition to the service's outdoor play area along a short pathway. Both doors were secured with a double lock system. The entrance door features a door camera and a call bell, allowing staff to view and observe any callers to the service before authorising entry. The second exit door also features a double locking system, for which staff members hold a key, while in the outdoor play area.

##### Infection Control:

There were two children's toilets and hand-wash basins available in the service. Staff were observed supporting and assisting the children with toileting and handwashing both after using the bathroom and during outdoor play, as well as before snack time.

##### Administration of Medication:

Management discussed the medical care plans for individual children. Specialised training has been undertaken by staff to administer medication. The staff informed the inspectors that all medication was stored safely and securely in a locked medicine cabinet in the office area, with a key readily available for immediate access.

##### Safe Sleep:

There were three sleep mats available in the service for children if they wished to sleep. No child was observed to require sleep during the inspection.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. While it is acknowledged that the children did not use the trampoline on the day of the inspection, it was noted that it was frayed in two areas and could potentially tear and cause a child to fall through and injure themselves.
2. Two pieces of furniture located at either end of the large classroom were broken. At the top end of the room near the service's toilets, a tall white shelving system with slide-in storage containers was observed

to be broken, with the shelf holders missing, loose or broken. The loose containers that were sitting on top of each other could potentially fall on a child and injure them.

The white sideboard unit at the other end of the classroom had a missing door. The door hinges and the sharp pointed edges of the unit exposed could injure a child.

3. On the pathway outside the exit door to the outdoor play area, there were four rubber mats which were arranged haphazardly at intervals, posing a trip hazard to both children and staff. This non-compliance has been identified on the previous inspections, 28 August 2024 and 04 August 2023.
4. While children's times of entry and exit were recorded on the service's record application, there was no record maintained of any visitors to the service, and neither inspector was requested to record their details and purpose of visit.

### **Infection Control:**

5. The handwash basin located in the large classroom had two loose taps and was not functioning and therefore was not accessible for handwashing in the classroom.
6. The painted windowsills in the large classroom were worn, which did not provide for effective cleaning and disinfecting of the areas.
7. One of the sleep mats was observed to be frayed at one of its folds, which did not allow for effective disinfecting between uses.
8. The sensory mats that the inspector found in one of the loose storage shelves were observed to be ingrained with dirt and not properly cleaned.

### **Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

#### **Corrective & Preventive Action**

##### **General Safety:**

1. The trampoline has been removed and the registered provider is sourcing a more robust one.
2. The damaged furniture has been removed with new furniture in its place and the weekly risk assessment has been amended to include furniture wear and tear.
3. The rubber mats have been secured with stronger ties and the weekly risk assessment has been amended to include the mats.
4. There is now a sign in sheet in place to record visitors arrival and departures and all visitors are obliged to use it.

### Infection Control:

5. This handwash basin is not in use. It was in the room and the registered provider has decided to leave it there as it does not pose a risk.
6. The windowsills have been cleaned and the registered provider is organising for them to be repainted.
7. The frayed mats have been removed. Going forward the frayed or damaged items will be removed.
8. The registered provider stated that the sensory mats are frequently used outdoors and have been fully cleaned and have been added to the weekly deep clean list.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Photographic evidence of the new furniture, the secured mats and the sign in sheet was submitted.

#### Infection Control:

A copy of the amended policies was submitted

### 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)

The registered provider has ensured that a person trained in first aid was available to the children at all times. Evidence was available to demonstrate that the four staff members were trained to the first aid responder standard and available on the day of inspection.

(2)

A suitably equipped first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the kitchen.

## 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)

Fire drills were completed monthly, and a written record of these was maintained. The last fire drill was carried out on 14 August 2025.

(b) A maintenance record was available to demonstrate the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment, fire alarms and smoke alarms. The maintenance was carried out in December 2024 and July 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the hallways and exits of the service.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider had a valid certificate of insurance for a full-day care service for 22 children.