

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025FL003
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Funtimes Creche
-------------------------	-----------------

Address of Service:	Mill Street, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
----------------------------	-------------------------------------

Eircode:	K32 W026
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Quinlan
-------------------------------------	------------------

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

Date(s) of Inspection:	03/12/2025
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	4	PM	4
-----------------------------------	----	---	----	---

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle
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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.
---------------------------------	-----------------

Description of service

Funtimes is a recently opened full day care service registered to accommodate children aged 1-6 years from 7.30am – 7.00pm Monday to Friday. The service is one of two services owned and operated by the registered provider in Balbriggan Co. Dublin and operates from a 2-storey building located in the centre of Balbriggan. The Service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) and also provides care to school aged children up to the age of 12 years. There are 4 care rooms in the service, 3 on the ground floor and one care room on the first floor. The Toddler room was the only care room in operation on the day of inspection. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 6 staff members including the service manager who provides support and break relief in the care room as needed. A chef is employed who prepares and serves the food to 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 announced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19.

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was the designated person in charge on the day of the inspection and was present when the inspector arrived unannounced on the day of inspection and remained present on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The files for 6 staff members including the person in charge were reviewed.

(2)(a) and (b) Two written, validated references were available for the staff member employed in the service.

(a) Eight written references were from past employers.

(b) Four written references were from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 6 staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 1 adult who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Five staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service, and each held appropriate childcare qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, 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.*
- (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 at all times.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.
- There were 4 pre-school children aged 2 years 3 months to 2 years 10 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- (8)(a) A second adult is on the premises at all times when the service is in operation.

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

The following examples demonstrate how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- Throughout the inspection the Early years practitioners were observed warmly engaging with the children, encouraging and working in partnership when meeting the children's care needs and facilitating their play activities.
- The practitioners sat with the children at mealtimes, chatting and providing assistance as required which created a relaxed atmosphere. In the care room, children who were able were encouraged to feed themselves with assistance and encouragement provided by the practitioners as required, and plenty of time allowed for the children to eat without rushing. Drinking water was freely available to the children at all times and was served with snacks and meals in the care room.
- The children's personal needs were attended to promptly. Children who required nappy changing were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required and the children who were toilet trained were supported to use the toilet as necessary. Bibs were placed on the children as needed to protect their clothes prior to eating and the children washed their hands before eating and had their hands and faces cleaned after they finished their meals.
- The children who required sleep were placed to sleep on sleep mats on the floor of the care room after they had their lunch at 11:30 am. Children who required it were observed being supported to settle to sleep, with the practitioners observed sitting with and calmly soothing children before the children fell asleep.
- Throughout the inspection, children's interests were observed to be followed, and practitioners' were responsive to their ideas and requests for their preferred activities and materials. Children moved freely in their environment and were praised for their efforts and accomplishments.
- The children's family photographs were displayed at the children's eye level alongside the children's rest area in order to allow the children bridge the gap between the service and home. The children's artwork was displayed on the walls of the care room which supported the children in feeling valued and appreciated.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children on the day of the inspection with the children dressed appropriately for the winter weather before going outside.

Supporting Relationships around Children

- A welcoming atmosphere in the service was evidenced by the practitioners' greeting children, parents, and guardians in a friendly manner on their arrival to the service. A written record of the pre-school children's meals, activities, general wellbeing and, if relevant, nappy changes and sleep was maintained on

a daily basis and this information was shared with the parents when the children were being collected from the service.

- The children demonstrated that they felt familiar and comfortable with the practitioners caring for them as evidenced in the children reaching out physically and verbally to the staff members for support and comfort and calling practitioners by name. In turn, the practitioners were warm and responsive to the children and returned displays of affection verbally and when the children sought hugs and physical contact during the inspection.
- The practitioners were observed working collaboratively to support children's play and learning. Regular informative interactions were heard taking place between the practitioners when updating each other on the children's needs and progress, and when coordinating the implementation of activities. Appropriate hand over regarding the children's needs and preferences was shared with cover staff when they were relieving the core staff breaks in the care room.
- At the earliest signs of conflict, the practitioners used distraction and re-direction to good effect on the small number of occasions when children were observed experiencing challenges in play or interactions during the inspection. The adults were observed appropriately supporting children to find positive solutions including suggesting alternative toys or taking turns, thereby preventing the minor issues observed from escalating and avoiding upset on the children's part.

Physical & Material Environment:

- The tables in the care rooms in the service were waist height, and the chairs were appropriate to the age and stage of the children attending the service.
- In the Toddler room where the children predominantly spent their time and the adjoining Toddler room 2 where the children also had access to, the play materials and equipment were positioned on low level shelving to enable the children to take and return materials as they chose. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the materials and play resources they chose to play with.
- The Toddler room was spacious and enabled the children to move around freely. The room was laid out in clearly defined interest areas to prompt and support children to engage in self-directed and imaginative play. Interest areas included a home and kitchen area, construction resources, arts and crafts materials in addition to a variety of jigsaws, a range of wooden toys and a selection of musical instruments all of

which were stored on low-level open fronted shelving which were accessible to the children to take and return as they chose.

- The children also spent time in the Toddler 2 room which was laid out with areas of interest including a home area with a range of accessorial equipment including tableware, cooking utensils, dress up resources, dolls, buggies and cradles to enable the children to extend their real and imaginary play, construction areas, a wide range of table top materials and open-ended materials to enhance the children's play experiences and curiosity.
- In both care rooms there were a broad range of books available to support the children's language development located alongside comfortable rest areas.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed by high boundary walls and a secure side gate and was surfaced in artificial grass. A climbing frame with an enclosed top, a climbing ladder and slide attached was provided for the children to use. A well-resourced outdoor kitchen with a range of materials for the children to extend their play was available for the children to use. A large art easel was provided in addition to a range of ride on and push along toys. The children enjoyed playing with sand and seashells and used materials from the outdoor kitchen to extend their play. The area provided the children with the opportunity for running and free movement.