

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025WH001				
Name of Service:	Tots Creche and Daycare				
Address of Service:	6 Farranshock Park, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath				
Eircode:	N91 PY6N				
Name of Registered Provider:	Annette Akerlind Audrey Murray				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Dates of Inspection:	23/09/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>48</td> <td>PM</td> <td>27</td> </tr> </table>	AM	48	PM	27
AM	48	PM	27		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly				
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn				
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

Tots Creche and Daycare is one of eleven privately owned, early years' services operated by two registered providers. The service offers full day, part time and sessional care and education to children aged 0 - 6 years. Tots Creche and Daycare open Monday to Friday from 07:00am-18:30pm. The sessional service operates from 09:30am – 12:30pm Monday to Friday.

The premises operates from a new purpose-built building situated within a residential estate in the town of Mullingar, Co Westmeath. The premises has a Baby Wobbler room, Wobbler room, Toddler room, full day care room and one ECEC room. The premises also includes two sleep rooms, an onsite kitchen, a staff room and an office. A secure outdoor play area is located to the back of the building.

Staffing

The registered providers employ 16 staff members, to include 13 staff members who provide direct care to the children, an operations manager, an area manager and cook. There were fifteen staff members present on the day of inspection; this included eleven adults working directly with the children, the operations manager, the person in charge, the deputy person in charge and a cook.

The registered providers do not work in the service however, provide administrative support across their eleven services. The operations manager and person in charge facilitated the inspection on 23 September.

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 and 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,

- Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) (4) - Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1)(2)(8)(a)- Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(a) - Health, Welfare and Development 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 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
- (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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

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

(b)

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

(c)

There was a clear management structure in place which identified the roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2)

Eighteen staff files including both registered providers were reviewed, and the following was noted:

- (a)
Twenty written validated references were available from a previous employer and
- (b)
Sixteen written validated references were available from a reputable source.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the eighteen staff. In regard to the eighteen 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 the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.
- (4)
Fifteen employed childcare staff members working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. In the morning on arrival at the service, there were forty-eight children being supervised directly by ten adults. In the afternoon, there were twenty-seven children being supervised by eight adults.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

Morning

- There were three adults providing direct care to eight children aged between 0-2 years in the Baby Wobbler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 1-2 years in the Wobbler room.
- There was one adult providing direct care to five children aged between 2 and a half - years and 3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 3 – 4 and a half in the Full Day Care Room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to seventeen ECEC children aged between 2-3 years in the ECEC Room.

Afternoon

- There were two adults providing direct care to seven children aged between 0-2 years in the Baby Wobbler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 1-2 years in the Wobbler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to five children aged between 2 and a half - years and 3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to six children aged between 3 – 4 and a half in the Full Day Care Room.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

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) Basic needs of children

There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service. Meals and snacks were provided by the service for children attending on a full day and part time basis. Food was freshly prepared and cooked by an onsite cook. Dinner on the day of inspection was rice, chicken and vegetables. The morning snack provided by the service included fresh fruit, bagels and rice cakes. Babies were given fresh fruit puree with yoghurt. Dairy free yoghurt was available for any child who was dairy intolerant. Children attending on a sessional basis were observed to eat their morning snack sitting together at low level tables. Water was freely available in each room. Babies were fed in highchairs and wore bibs to protect their clothes. Babies' hands and faces were cleaned with individual wash cloths following meals. Hand washing routines were well established in each room and children were observed to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and as required.

Nappy changing and toileting were observed to be timely, and a positive experiences for the children. Staff interacted with the children, telling them they were going to have their nappy changed, and engaging in conversation during the nappy change. Older children accessed individual sanitary accommodation provided in each care room. Children were observed to move freely in and out of the sanitary accommodation or avail of support when needed.

Sleep practice observed on the day of inspection were child led. Babies in the baby and wobbler room slept when they needed and were allowed sleep as long as they required. Cots were available in the two designated sleep rooms for children from the baby/wobbler and wobbler room. Children from the Toddler room were observed to go to

sleep after dinner on low level beds. Sleeping children were physically monitored at 10-minute intervals. Details of the children's breathing, position and colour were recorded by staff in a 'sleep book' stored in the sleep room.

Supporting relationships around children

Staff working with the children were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names, appropriate eye contact was made, and soft vocal tones were used during all interactions. Babies and younger children were observed to be held and cuddled by staff and any child that became upset or unsettled was immediately attended to and reassured. The Baby/wobbler room had an armchair for staff to sit on when bottle feeding or providing comfort to a child. Babies were held during bottle feeds and were not rushed during feeds observed.

Family walls were displayed in the care rooms, helping the children feel connected to home. A photograph of each child was placed above their low-level hooks for their coats and bags.

An intercom system was in place throughout the service allowing staff to easily communicate with each other if they needed relief staff. Communication with parents was via an online portal whereby parents have access to view their child's activities, sleep, nappy changes and other relevant updates. Parents can also write into the portal and communicate with staff. Parents were observed to enter the service for collection and pick their children up from their individual care rooms and have an opportunity to communicate with staff daily.

Physical and material environment

Babies in the Baby/wobbler room were observed to play with pull along toys and toy vehicles. The room was laid out to facilitate free movement with various interest areas throughout the room. Low level soft vinyl mats were placed throughout the room for babies to crawl, sit, lie down and climb on. A cosy corner had a child level mirror; vinyl mats, cushions and vinyl wall bumpers allowing children to move and explore freely. Open baskets and boxes with toys were positioned a child level, and babies were observed to access the baskets and retrieve toys as they wished. Babies were brought outside to their designated outdoor play area before dinner time. Babies wore outdoor protective overalls and were observed crawling on the shock resistant ground. They engaged in messy play and crawled in and out of a tuff tray placed on the group with jelly for a sensory activity.

Staff in the wobbler room sat on the soft floor mats and read books with the children. Containers on accessible low shelves offered a variety of sensory toys such as soft spiky balls, soft books made with varying materials and stickle bricks, musical instruments and toy animals. A tuff tray with sand provided opportunity for sensory play and gross motor development.

Children in the in the Toddler room were observed engaged in role play at the dressing table area which had hairbrushes and a hair dryer, a kitchen area and a shop area with a cash register and ironing board. Imaginative play was promoted with the availability of dolls, toy cars and dress up areas.

Children in the full day care room had a range of play-based equipment to choose from that offered stimulation, exploration, and provided for imaginative activities. A dress up area, playhouse and kitchen area with toy equipment were available. Buckets of crayons, markers and art equipment were freely available for children who wished to partake in arts and crafts activities. A cosy reading area was available for children to relax and take a break from activities as they wished.