

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2026DN001
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Inspiring Minds Ltd
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Unit 103 Newtown Park, Malahide Road Industrial Park, Dublin 17.
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D17 HP57
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Michelle Fitzgerald
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	26/03/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	1	PM	3
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8 D08 X01F
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L.A Webster
<b>Title:</b>	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).

### Description of service

Inspiring minds is a bespoke Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) service that offers part time care and education to children aged from 3-6 years old. Located in North Dublin within an industrial estate, the service operates from Monday to Friday over 42 weeks of the year from 08:30am -17:30pm. The premises consists of one spacious classroom, namely the Croítear Sona room. Additionally, the service has sanitary facilities, a staff room, an office and an enclosed outdoor play area toward the front of the service.

### Staffing

The registered provider works within the service and employs five adults that work within the service. On the morning of inspection, the registered provider was present with three staff working directly with the child.

### 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.

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 registered provider, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
  - (b) A review of the roster evidenced that either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
  - (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was further evidenced through discussion with staff.
- (2) A review of paperwork and discussion with the registered provider showed that there are currently five staff employed by the registered provider to work within the service. The files of five adults and the registered provider were reviewed.

- (a) There were nine written and validated references available from a past employer.
  - (b) There were three written and validated references available from a source other than a past employer.
  - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six adults.
  - (d) Police vetting was available for two adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that all six adults who worked directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification that is deemed of equivalence 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.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection, there was one child being cared for by three adults in morning and three children being cared for by three adults in afternoon. Additionally, the registered provider was available to provide support in the care room as needed.
- (2) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspector arrived announced to the service and throughout the inspection. Staff were aware of the required ratios for the age range of children within the room.

### 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 following practices were observed to be in place to support the children within the service on the day of inspection:

##### Basic Needs:

- Staff were observed to gently support children transitioning from activities towards hand washing.
- During snack time, staff sat with children and engaged in meaningful conversations, ensuring a positive experience for the children.
- Upon observation it was documented that the care room reflects various aspects of the children's belonging and identity this was done through displays such as 'family wall'; 'birthday wall', storage cupboards for bags and children's items with their imagery on it. Additionally, children's artwork was displayed throughout the care room.
- Daily routines and activities throughout the week were visually displayed for the children around the care room.
- Children were observed to freely move around the care room, choosing their own play experiences.

##### Supporting Relationships:

- Staff were observed to be kind, respectful and caring towards their interactions with the children, which created a calm atmosphere within the care room.
- Staff were seen to positively engage with parents and guardians upon collection and drop off times.
- In conversation with staff, it was reiterated that they ensure to positively communicate with children through various verbal, imagery and numerical activities.
- It was evident that there was a good sense of teamwork and role-modelling within the care room. This is important for children to see best practice in real time.

## Physical and Material Environment:

- Adequately sized tables and chairs were available to the developmental age and stage of the children.
- Equipment within the room was accessible on low shelving and was themed and labelled to invite the children to play.
- There was a designated cosy area within the room for the children to rest as needed.
- The care room had designated play stations for the children such as 'home corner' 'dress up' 'art trolley' 'small world play' and 'building areas.'
- Toys and equipment were seen in good working order, and there was an adequate number of toys for children to choose from.
- Outdoor equipment consisted of playhouses, footballs, and a number of toys to promote physical play and support gross motor development.