

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL096
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Name of Service:	Funtimes
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Address of Service:	1 Naul Road, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K32 K259
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Quinlan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	18/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	42
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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 & Y Kelly
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).

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Description of service

Funtimes is a full day care service registered to accommodate children aged 0-6 years during the hours of operation, from 7.30am – 6pm Monday to Friday. The service operates from a 2-storey building located within walking distance of the town of Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. 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 5 care rooms in the service, namely the Ducklings room, the Penguins room, two adjoining rooms on the first floor operated as the Cubs room and the Butterfly room on the first floor which accommodated both Early years children and school aged children on the day of inspection and the Den room which is operated from a separate prefabricated unit to the rear of the premises. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider oversees the operation of the early years service. A further 25 staff members including a service manager, a chef and a housekeeper are employed in this service.

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.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23,24,26 and 28; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, service manager, 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,*

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(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 designated person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

(c) A clear management structure was evident in the service and was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster and through discussion with the staff team.

Following a discussion with the registered provider and a review of the staff files it was determined that 8 new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection of the service. These staff files were reviewed; seven staff members work directly with the children attending the service. The files for the remaining staff members had been reviewed at the previous inspection of the service and met the regulatory requirement.

(2)(a) Thirteen validated written references were available from a previous employer.

(b) Three validated written references were available from a source other than a previous employer

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 8 staff members employed in the service. All staff Garda vetting records demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for 3 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 7 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service including the registered provider held an appropriate childcare

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qualification at Level 5 or higher 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.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced in the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Ducklings room there were 7 children aged 1 year 10 months to 2 year 6 months attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Penguins room there were 11 children aged between 2 years and 3 years 1 month, all attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Cubs room, there were 11 children aged between 2 years 9 months and 5 years 6 months, all attending on a full day care basis, being care for by 4 staff members.
- In the Den there were 7 children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years 5 months being cared for by 1 staff member.

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- In the Butterfly room 8 children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years 5 months being cared for by 1 staff member.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by rosters and staff attendance records maintained at 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, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service in relation to the following:

Basic needs:

- On the inspector's arrival to the service, the children were engaged in play-based activities in the care rooms and in the outdoor play area. The early years practitioners were present and joining in with the children's play, providing encouraging and nurturing interactions to children and supporting them to locate and set up materials to extend their play. The children were comfortable and confident to make choices about their learning, and the practitioners were responsive to the children's ideas and requests.
- Food was prepared and cooked in the service on a daily basis and a varied and nutritious 3-week menu was on display in the premises. A selection of cereal is provided to children for breakfast if required. On the day of inspection, the children in the Ducklings room had beans on toast for lunch with the children in the remaining care rooms having toasted ham and cheese sandwiches, boiled ham, mashed potato and vegetables was served for dinner at approximately 3pm with a further snack provided later in the afternoon. Dietary requirements specified by the parents were accommodated, as stated on the menu and observed in practice during the inspection. The practitioners sat at the children's level at mealtimes, including when feeding the younger children and supporting the children to feed themselves where appropriate. Mealtimes were observed to be social, interactive occasions with the children in each room given plenty of time to eat and not rushed.

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- The children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner. Practitioners were observed warmly engaging with the children during these procedures and taking the opportunity to chat with and sing songs to the children. The practitioners were observed to be responsive to the children's cues to use the toilet and prompting and support were provided when required. Bibs were placed on the children as needed before they ate and the children's hands were washed prior to eating with their hands and face cleaned afterwards.
- Practitioners in the Ducklings room described how the children's Individual sleep routines were facilitated with children given the opportunity to sleep as they needed. On the day of inspection all of the children slept following their lunch in either of the 2 sleep rooms located directly off the care room. The children attending the Penguins room slept in the sleep room adjacent to the care room after their lunch. The children in each room had access to rest areas which were suitably equipped with mats, cushions and soft seating to facilitate children to relax and rest comfortably if they wished to do so during the day.
- The early years practitioners were observed to approach children's behaviour in a supportive manner, calmly distracting or re-directing the children and using problem-solving techniques to good effect before any minor issues escalated.
- Outdoor play is embraced in the service; all the children present enjoyed time in the outdoor play area to the rear of the service. Practitioners ensured that the children had sunscreen applied prior to going outside.

Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the service, parents and children were observed being greeted warmly on arrival to the service and practitioners took the opportunity to provide feedback to parents and guardians on the children's day in the service when children were collected. In the Ducklings room a daily record of the children's feeding, nappy changes, activities, general wellbeing and sleep was maintained for the children and shared with the parents. Child-led play was encouraged and supported and the children were observed engaging in activities using play equipment of their own choice under the guidance of practitioners, with assistance provided when necessary. Practitioners were heard using soft tones of voice and appeared interested and enthusiastic when engaging with the children, including times when the practitioners acted as play partners with the children indoors and when outdoors.
- The inspectors observed supportive interactions taking place between the practitioners and children during the inspection as evidenced in the staff members in each care room speaking warmly and positively to and about the children and engaging with the children in a responsive and caring manner. Children

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throughout the care rooms were observed reaching out and hugging staff members unprompted with the staff members observed responding physically and verbally in an affectionate manner.

- Throughout the service practitioners engaged well together and supported each other in the care of the children.

Physical and material environment:

- In each care room, play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play. Age-appropriate table-top games and play equipment to support the development of the children's fine motor skills were provided in the care rooms. These included jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, shape sorters, magnets, interlocking plastic toys, stacking toys, threading equipment and peg boards. The children in the care rooms demonstrated familiarity with their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The care rooms were laid out in designated areas of interest including suitably resourced home corners with baby care items and dress up costumes, construction areas, arts and crafts areas, and rest areas. An adequate number of books were provided in each room to support the children's language development and provide choice for storytelling.
- Sensory play experiences were facilitated throughout the service
- The service has an enclosed outdoor area which is located to the rear of the service. The area is divided into 3 areas, one area being available to the children in the Ducklings room and Penguins room only, this area was covered with a safety surface and the following resources were provided, a playhouse, a climbing frame and slide, a mud kitchen, wooden steps, a range of ride on toys and a wooden car with steering wheels. A larger area designated for use by the older pre-school children and the school aged children was covered in artificial grass. A wooden sit-in boat; a climbing frame with 2 slides, a climbing wall and a standing platform; ride-on toys; footballs and tyres were included in the play equipment provided in this section. An area in this section was located beneath a rigid plastic roof which enabled the children to play outside regardless of the weather, this area was furnished with table and chairs which facilitated the children to participate in tabletop activities outside.

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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 doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.

Infection Control:

- Children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after outdoor and messy play.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service.
- Disposable aprons were and suitable disposable gloves were available for nappy changing procedures.
- Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies which reduced the risk of cross-infection.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years slept in a standard cot on the day of inspection.
- In discussion with the inspectors, staff members described safe sleep practices. The records indicated and staff members reported that sleep checks were carried out and documented at 10 minutes intervals, noting the child's position, colour and breathing pattern.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

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Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing room adjoining the Ducklings room was used for general storage. The children's bibs and other care items were stored in this area which posed a risk that these items could become contaminated.

Administration of Medication:

2. The health care plan for 1 child in the Penguins Room who required medication for a nut allergy did not contain clear information and therefore posed a safety risk to the child. When the staff member was asked about this child's health care plan, they were unsure about what was required in relation to the child's health care plan. A more detailed up to date care plan is required for this child to minimise the safety risk to the child in relation to administration of medication.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Infection Control:

1. The bibs and other care items were removed from the nappy changing room adjoining the Ducklings room to prevent the risk of cross contamination.

Administration of Medication:

2. A more detailed care plan for the child was compiled by management to ensure the details are clear to all staff members. This will ensure the necessary steps are followed to minimise the safety risk to the child in relation to the administration of their medication.

Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. Registered provider spoke to staff regarding the importance of preventing cross contamination and the area was not to use as a storage area. A new area was found in the Ducklings room for the care items.

Administration of Medication:

2. Going forward staff will follow the care plan for any child that requires medication for allergies.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic and documented evidence was provided.

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Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that all of the children were signed in and out of the service as required.

(3)(a) & (b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. Visitor's attendance at the service was recorded in a visitors' book. The inspector was requested to record her presence in the service on the day of inspection.

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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) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place on 31/07/2026.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 26th February 2026 and the smoke alarms were serviced on 30/06/2026.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 95 children for full day care with an expiry date of 27/03/2027.