

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY105
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Name of Service:	Puffins Childcare
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Address of Service:	9 O'Connell Street, Caherciveen, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V23 Y884
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ashleigh Galvin
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	24
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	M O'Reilly & M Burke
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

Puffins Childcare is a privately owned full daycare service that also provides sessional and part time care. It is registered to cater for children aged 0 to 6 years. It is currently offering care to children age 1 to 6 years, this includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The registered daily opening hours are from 08:30 to 17:00 hours each day Monday to Friday. The service also operates a school aged care service.

The service operates from a two-storey terraced building which had been suitably adapted, extended and modernised to provide a childcare setting. There are four playrooms, two of which occupy the original building and two playrooms are situated in the new detached two storey wing to the rear of the property.

The service is situated adjacent to a public car park which allows for the safe arrival and departure of the children with their parents. Following a fit for purpose inspection that took place in June 2025, there is an additional room known as the Puffling Room. The room is located near the existing Pod 1 room the ground floor. This is used as a playroom in the morning and converted into a sleep room in the afternoon for the older children that require a sleep

Staffing

There are 18 adults employed by the service, including the registered provider. On the day of inspection, 11 were present in the service, 10 of whom were working directly with the children. The registered provider was service based on day of inspection.

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

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- 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.

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, deputy, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was also appointed as the person in charge to oversee the operation of the childcare service. A designated deputy person in charge was available to deputise as required.
- (b) Both the person in charge and the deputy person in charge was on duty at the service when the inspectors arrived and facilitated the inspection process.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified systems of authority and accountability. Roles and responsibilities were evident in each care room, which included a room leader and early years practitioners. Some staff were employed under the Access Inclusion Model Scheme.
- (2)
- A total of 18 staff files were reviewed.
- (a) There were 33 written and validated references on file from past employers.
- (b) There were 3 written references from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 18 staff working with children. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d). Police vetting was required and available for review for five staff, two of which required verified translations and these were available on file.
- (4)
- Records demonstrated that 18 staff members working directly with children held 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.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) Two references for one staff member had no corresponding validation on file.
- (3)
- Three references were not validated until after the two staff members had commenced employment in the service.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2) The registered provider completed the validation checklist forms for the staff member's two references.
- (3) The service also updated their recruitment policy and risk management assessment to ensure references are validated prior to starting employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the validation checklist forms, and a copy of the updated relevant sections of the recruitment policy and risk management assessment were submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) and (3) has been adequately addressed.

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) There were sufficient staff members available to the children throughout the period of inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratios were maintained throughout the day.

The required adult to child ratios were observed in each of the care rooms as follows:

Pod 1

In the morning, there were 5 staff members caring for 15 children attending, aged between 1 and 3 years. Twelve children were attending on a full day care basis. There were a number of children who were settling in during the morning period and stayed from one to three hours at time of inspection.

In the afternoon, there were 4 staff members caring for 12 children with the same age profile.

Pod 3

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In the morning, there were 3 staff members caring for 11 children attending, aged between 3 and 4 years on a part time and full day care basis. In the afternoon, there were 2 staff members caring for 12 children.

Pod 4

There was 1 staff member caring for 8 children, aged between 5-6 years on a part-time basis. This room closed at 14:30 hours on day of inspection.

Pod 2

This room was not in operation at time of inspection.

(8)

(a) According to the staff roster, the service was operated with at least two adults present throughout the day. A minimum of two adults were also on duty throughout the inspection process.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)

(h) A written record of the attendance of each child on a daily basis that included the arrival and departure time from the service was recorded and maintained in the service.

(i) The current staff roster was presented for review and was noted to include the start, finish and break times of rostered staff. The roster was in keeping with the staff working in the service on the day of inspection.

(j) From the 20 administrations of medication records available, all 20 records were assessed and deemed satisfactory.

(k) From the 21 accidents and incidents records available, all 21 records were assessed and were deemed satisfactory.

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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)

Basic needs

- The inspectorate observed the children in each of the playrooms playing outdoors on day of inspection. Most of the outdoor play space was covered with canvas type overhead covers which protected the children from the direct rays of the sun when playing outdoors. Children were noted to be suitably dressed for the warm weather, including sun hats. Staff were observed putting sunscreen supplied by parents on the children prior to outdoor play. The children were closely supervised by staff while playing outdoors in large and small groups while playing on ride on and push toys. Other children were observed doing tabletop activities, for example colouring, painting and block building.
- Water was freely available to children, and staff were noted to remind and support children to drink water throughout the day. The inspector observed the staff giving the younger children drinks of water during the morning. Staff were observed filling up the individual drinking water bottles after outdoor play and prior to mid-morning snack in Pod 3.
- Later the younger children were given a choice of whether they wanted to stay playing outdoors or go indoors and a group of children went indoors with some staff members. They were observed completing jigsaws and block building.
- In Pod 1 children were given the opportunity to opt out for a little while after outdoor play in the large soft seating area with padded mats and cushions which helped them to relax and unwind prior to mid-morning snack.
- Suitable play activities were observed as the older children were noted having a water pistol play group activity while playing outdoors under the close supervision of staff.
- The mid-morning snack was later than usual and the children had built up an appetite from playing outdoors. The younger children were encouraged to independently feed themselves and staff provided support when necessary. Children were not rushed when eating their snacks and meals. Staff allowed

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children to eat at their own pace and engaged in conversations with the children at snack time. The morning snacks supplied by parents in Pod 1 and Pod 3 were healthy and nutritious with a selection of sandwiches, wraps, yogurts. Fruit and vegetables were cut in appropriate sizes.

- The adults were observed to support the children to interact positively with each other working in large and small groups and individually. There was a calm and pleasant atmosphere in place. The children were supported to manage their behaviour and to self-regulate with an emphasis on sharing, kindness, and patience in the setting.
- Adults were observed to communicate sensitively with children. Staff were observed to hold children in positive regard and to assist children feeling safe and secure, by their caring and considerate approach to the children in their care, for example, showing warmth and affection and responding to children's verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Staff were observed supporting children's language development at story time in each of the rooms throughout planned activities and free play. Staff were observed to sit with children throughout the day and discuss foods they were eating or chat with them about the activities they were doing.
- The children in the Pod 3 and Pod 4 were supported with toileting and hand washing as needed. The staff were observed carrying out nappy changing at regular intervals and as needed in Pod 1. Children's toileting and hygiene needs were attended to regularly and staff assisted children when they needed it. There was a supply of tissues available to the children and staff supported children cleaning their noses when required.
- Children's need for sleep was met with children having access to a designated sleep rooms. The sleep room had an adequate number of standard cots with safety mattresses for the younger child. Suitable sleep equipment was available for the older child who wanted to sleep while attending the service. The older children were observed sleeping in the Puffling room that was converted into a sleep room on day of inspection.
- Child height hooks and storage shelving was available to the older child to encourage independent dressing and organisation of their personal belongings.
- Children's need for mobility was met throughout the service with children having periods of indoor and outdoor play as observed on day of inspection.
- A hard copy record was predominantly used to share information with parents regarding their children's activities of daily living while in the service, for example, food and fluid intake, toileting, nappy changes,

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sleep and rest periods, activities, emerging interests. Phone calls and informal face to face discussion at arrival and collection times were also incorporated.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The playrooms were visibly clean and well maintained. A selection of the children's artwork, along with their birthdays and family photographs were prominently displayed. The playrooms had a range of age and stage appropriate play resources available to children.
- Pod 1 had a cordoned area for the babies which was clean and well maintained. This was not used at time of inspection as all the children were over 12 months. It was furnished with soft furnishing, wall mounted activity centres and a wide range of age-appropriate toys such as mobiles and sound making equipment. There was a clean and comfortable chair for adults to sit, comfort and nurture the babies. A compact sensory room was also situated beside Pod 1. The room had soft furnishing and a small ball pool. The dimmed lighting added to the ambient atmosphere where a child could be offered individual one to one if required.
- Suitably sized tables and chairs were available to the children in all rooms. This supported mealtime routines and enabled the children to carry out tabletop activities.
- Shelving used to display play materials was positioned at a low height, which supported ease of access by children. In general, the play equipment seen in use on the day of inspection were maintained in good condition.
- There were furnished home areas with accompanying play equipment, dolls and accessories which supported imaginary play.
- The development of fine motor skills was encouraged through the availability of play resources such as connectable shapes, threading materials, and jigsaws.
- The children were observed colouring and painting on day of inspection. There were adequate supplies in each of the rooms of art and craft materials, paper, age-appropriate crayons, pencils and finger paints to promote fine motor skills.

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- There was a variety of different sized age-appropriate building blocks and plastic bricks in each of the rooms which promoted construction and imaginary play.
- Soft seating areas, with books and soft toys, were included within the care rooms, for any child who may wish to opt out of scheduled activities or take some time to relax as seen on day of inspection.
- Story time was observed in each of the rooms where staff members were observed reading a book. Good interaction was observed with the children about the stories which supported the children's language development.
- The outdoor play area was laid with artificial grass for the children's comfort and safety. There was a tunnel/slide activity and a hard surface path allowed for the ride on bikes, balance bikes, scooters and tractors encouraging the children to master gross motor skill play while playing outdoors. There was a raised bed for the children's planting, many fence mounted activities such as mirrors and a mud kitchen encouraging imaginary and sensory play.

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 entrance door was noted to be secure and was maintained secure when not in use. Entrance and exit to and from the premises were adequately secured at time of inspection. This ensured that the risk of unauthorised access and the risk of a child exiting the premises while unsupervised were minimised.
- The emergency exit/fire doors were observed to be unobstructed.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children.
- The outdoor play areas were surrounded by walls and the premise buildings.

Infection Control:

- The children's nappies, wipes and barrier creams were maintained in clearly labelled individual storage areas in the nappy changing room beside Pod 1.
- At the children's wash hand basins, there was a supply of running water, liquid soap, wall mounted paper towels and lidded bins.

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- It was noted that handwashing routines took place after the children had used the toilet, after outdoor play and before snack times as observed in Pod 3
- Refrigerators were available in each of the playrooms for storing perishable foods provided.
- Tables were sanitised before and after mealtimes.
- Waste was disposed of appropriately and bins were observed to be pedal operated and lidded for the secure and safe storage of waste.

Safe Sleep:

- It was observed that staff conducted 10-minute physical sleep checks on children who slept in both sleep areas.
- Cots, floor beds and floor mats were spaced the required 50cm apart.
- Staff were seen to remain in both sleep rooms monitoring the sleeping children.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Contrary to safe sleep guidelines, the air temperature in the two rooms where children slept was measured above the required range of sleep room temperatures of between 18°C to 22° Celsius on day of inspection. The temperature of the designated sleep room, where children aged between 13 and 15 months slept, was measured between 22.7°C and 23.5°C on day of inspection. The Pufflings room was converted into a sleep room for a period in the afternoon, where children aged between 16 and 24 months and children aged between 2 and 3 years slept. During this time the recorded air room temperature in this room was between 23°C and 23. 8°Celcius.
High sleep room temperatures poses a risk to the sleeping child.
2. There were visible trailing cables accessible to children in Pod 3 on the day of inspection. Due to the potential safety risk, children should have no access to trailing cables.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Management have taken steps to reduce the room temperature, by purchasing room thermometers and servicing the air conditioning unit. In her written response, the register provider stated that they plan to purchase more air conditioners. The service's safe sleep policy has been updated and shared with staff. Management reminded staff about the importance of regulating room temperatures.

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2. The register provider has secured the trailing cables to the wall in Pod 3 that were accessible to children. A memo was also shared with staff to remind them of their responsibilities to complete the daily risk assessments in each care room, which included no trailing cables or wires.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the thermometers, air conditioning service invoice, and a copy of the updated relevant sections of the safe sleep policy were submitted.
2. Photographic evidence and copy of the relevant daily risk assessment checklist were submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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) There were a number of staff with First Aid Responder (FAR) certification Five of the staff present on day of inspection had current First Aid Responder (FAR) certification.

(2)

(a) On the day of inspection, there were sufficiently stocked first aid boxes available in the service to cater for the children.

(b) The First Aid boxes were accessible to staff and safely stored out of reach of children in the room.

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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) The registered provider has ensured that a record has been kept in respect of monthly fire drills, that took place in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place in Pod 1 on the 03 July 2026, Pod 3 on the 18 June 2026, Pod 4 on the 16 June 2026.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced on the 20 May 2026 and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on the 20 October 2025.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the wall of the playroom.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

- The services insurance certificates were available on the premises and demonstrated that the service was adequately insured. The information provided on the insurance certificate included details of the number of children covered daily which was 90. The start date, which was 01 March 2026, the end date, which was 31 February 2027. The certificate also stated the category of service covered which was full day care service and the name and address of the premises. The insurance cover also referred to details regarding, contents, public liability, fire and theft cover.