

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK189
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Name of Service:	TreeTops Early Years Care Ltd
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Address of Service:	Sunglen Old Pallas Pallasgreen Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 8R60
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tracey Hourigan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	02/09/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	54	PM	19
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate 2nd Floor Estuary House Henry Street Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	J Ryan and D Quinlan
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

Tree Tops Early Years Care is a privately owned full day care pre-school service. It operates from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. It provides a breakfast club each morning at 8am and an early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme from 9.00am to 12.30pm. A service for school aged children is provided each evening. The service operates from a purpose-built premises with 4 pre-school rooms and kitchen facilities. Sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities are located adjacent to the rooms. The childcare rooms open directly onto a well-resourced outdoor play area located to the side, front and back of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge and works on site each day. There are 17 staff employed at the service which includes the registered provider and kitchen staff. Twelve staff working directly with the children have the required qualifications in early childhood care and education. Four staff working with the school aged children do not have childcare qualifications.

Staff engage regularly in ongoing training and professional development.

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:

Regulation 8 (1) - Notification of change in circumstances.

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3)(4)– Management and recruitment.

Regulation 11(2) - Staffing levels.

Regulation 15(1)(a)-(i)– Record of pre-school child.

Regulation 19(1)(a) - Health, welfare and development of child.

Regulation 22 – Food and drink.

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.

Regulation 25(1)(2)(a)(b)- First aid.

Regulation 26(1)(a)(b)(4)- Fire safety measures.

Regulation 28 – Insurance.

Regulation 29 (d) – Premises.

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

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Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The service is registered to cater for children from two to six years of age however on the day of the inspection there were two children present who were less than two years of age.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The system has been updated to not allow children under two years of age to attend the service. Management will ensure the ages of children are checked on registration to avoid this happening in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions as stated by the registered provider meet the regulatory requirements of regulation 8(1).

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*

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(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) A designated person in charge of operating the service was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the designated person in charge was present and the staff roster indicated that this person or their deputy was available on the premises at all times.

(2) Six staff files relating to new staff appointed since the last inspection were reviewed.

(a) Ten written and validated references were available from past employers for staff members employed to work at the service.

(b) Two validated references were submitted by staff from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff documented on the staff roster. The re-vetting timeframes of every three years as outlined in the early years inspectorate regulatory notice were in place for the required staff.

(d) Police vetting was not required for any of the newly appointed staff members who may have resided outside of the jurisdiction for longer than six consecutive months.

(4) All staff working directly with the preschool children held an appropriate qualification in early childhood care and education or an equivalent such qualification.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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.

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Compliance Information

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 54 pre-school children and 11 adults on the premises for the morning sessional service. In the afternoon there were 19 preschool children present and 8 staff. At all times the written staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in all areas of the service as follows:

Green Room - There was 16 children (2.5 – 3 years) and 3 staff present.

Red Room - There were 22 children (3- 4 years) and 2 staff present.

Yellow Room - There were 6 children (2- 2.5 years) and 2 staff present.

Outdoor Preschool - There were 10 children (3- 4 years) and 2 staff present.

Orange Room - There were no children present in this room on the day of the inspection.

Additional staff were available to cover for staff breaks, office management and kitchen duties.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

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Compliance Information

- (1) A sample of 11 records for preschool children were reviewed, and all contained the required information listed above 1 (a) – (i).

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:

Healthy eating was promoted in the service. Nutritious hot meals and snacks were prepared fresh and served to the children throughout the day. Breakfast if required, lunch, dinner and an afternoon snack were served to the children who attended for the full day care service. Drinking water and cups were accessible to children in each of the rooms. Snacks consisted of ham and cheese sandwiches, a selection of fruit, raisins and crackers. Children were offered second helpings and allowed plenty of time to eat and enjoy their food. Hand washing by both the children and the staff was observed to take place before mealtimes.

Sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities were located next to the preschool rooms. Nappy changing supplies were within arm's reach of the changing unit. The privacy and dignity of each child was respected at all times in this area of the service.

Rest areas with soft furnishings were accessible in each of the rooms. Staff throughout the service encouraged quiet periods during the day to facilitate each child's need for comfort, rest and relaxation. Stackable beds were available for children greater than 2 years of age who required a sleep at the service.

A sheltered area was provided outside for the children allowing them to access the playground in all weather. A natural garden space outside facilitated a space for fun and exploration.

A full-time outdoor playgroup used an additional sheltered play area where activities relating to nature were evident such as planting sunflowers, strawberries, vegetables and learning about birds, bird songs and cloud formation. Staff and children were observed to wear suitable clothing which was warm and waterproof.

Risky and challenging play was evident where staff allowed the younger children climb to the top of the slide without assistance whilst standing beside the slide supervising the children at all times.

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Relationships and Interactions around children:

The service supported children in engaging in positive peer interactions. Staff facilitated cooperative play and participated in group activities. Staff were observed involved in children's play, initiating games and joining activities. When children showed signs of tiredness or upset, staff nurtured and comforted the children. They used soft tones, addressed children by name, sat at their eye level, and maintained direct eye contact during communication.

Staff were observed to interact very well with all the children in their care, speaking in low tones of voice, responding to the children and allowing them plenty of choice relating to playing games and outdoor activities. The service facilitated good communication with parents and guardians where discussions during daily drop-off and collection times allowed staff to share updates on significant events and activities. Teamwork was evident and each room had an appointed a team leader who facilitated ongoing communication with management.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service ensured that all children who attended received a nutritious and varied diet, which took the individual needs and preferences of children into consideration.

Savory mince, carrots and mashed potatoes was served for dinner and children were offered second helpings.

Snacks were available if a child did not wish to eat their dinner.

Dinner time was not rushed, and staff were observed to sit with their group to support eating and drinking.

Drinking water was available in each room should a child become thirsty.

The menu plan demonstrated that processed food was not served on a regular basis.

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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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following posed a potential risk to the safety of the preschool children.

1. A gate adjacent to the outdoor sanitary accommodation at the rear of the premises and the gate at the entrance to the main playground were not secured and posed a risk to the safety of the children. The lock on the gate was located at a level that may be accessible by an older child and or an unauthorised person could potentially enter the service.

It is acknowledged the issue was actioned immediately following the inspection and photographic evidence was submitted.

2. Staff belongings such as handbags and coats were stored in the nappy changing area within reach of the children.

It is acknowledged the issue was actioned immediately following the inspection where personal items belonging to staff were removed to the cabin at the rear of the premises.

Administration of Medication:

3. A child's medication was stored in an unlocked cupboard in the sanitary accommodation which posed a safety risk to children. It is acknowledged that this was actioned immediately whereby it was removed to a locked press in the kitchen.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. An additional latch and lock/chain system was put in place immediately to ensure the gates were secured.
2. All staff belongings were immediately removed from baby change area.

Administration of Medication:

3. Medication was removed immediately from the press in baby change area.

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Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety: Photographic evidence.

Administration of Medication: No documentation was submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions as stated by the registered provider meet the regulatory requirements of regulation 23.

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 five staff who had completed first aid responder certification for children.
- (2)(a) First aid boxes were accessible and safely stored in the service.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available if required by a child.

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 firefighting 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.

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Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The fire drills were practiced monthly, and the last recorded fire drill took place in August 2026.
- (b) The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently in October 2025, and a record was maintained of the number, type, and maintenance of the firefighting equipment. The fire and smoke alarm system were tested and serviced in October 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available to cover the number of children who attended and had an expiry date of 27th March 2027.