

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS072
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Name of Service:	Shooting Stars Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Irey, Ballyfin, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 E0P6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kathleen O'Connor
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/05/2026
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Regulatory Compliance Meeting:	06/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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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

Shooting Stars Pre-School is a sessional service located in the rural village of Ballyfin, Co. Laois. The service offers sessional care and education to children between the age of 2-6 years. The service is registered to operate a morning session from 9-12pm and an afternoon session from 12.15-15:30pm, Monday to Friday.

The preschool is attached to the registered providers domestic dwelling. The premises consists of a hallway, one large preschool room and a storage room. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the back of the setting.

Staffing

The registered provider employs two childcare staff to work in the premises. The registered provider works directly with the children and facilitated the inspection on 20 May. One childcare staff was present with the registered provider on the 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
- Discussion with relevant staff

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d),(4) – Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11 (1)(3)– Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- 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

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under

- Regulation 8 – Notification of Change of Circumstances,
- Regulation 24 – Checking in and out and record of attendance,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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.

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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 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 registered provider did not notify Tusla of changes to the following;
- The service is registered to provide care and education to 22 children per session, however, on inspection 26 children were in attendance for the morning session.
 - The service is registered to operate two sessions, between the hours of 09:00am – 12:00pm, and 12.15pm-15.30pm. On inspection, no break was provided between both sessions and the service continued to operate between 12.00pm and 12.15pm.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider moved additional children to the afternoon session so numbers will return to 22.
A message was sent to parents to advise that the service can no longer take children over 3 hours.
The registered provider will make sure only 22 children are in each session.

Supporting documentation submitted

Message sent out to parents advising of the above changes viewed by the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 8 have been adequately addressed.

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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*

(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.

(2)(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for three staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

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Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Two employed childcare staff members and the registered provider working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

- Two validated written references were not available in respect of one staff member.
- Two written references from a previous employer were not validated for the second staff member.
- No references were available for the registered provider.

(3)

The procedures in respect (2)(a)(b) were not carried out by the registered provider prior to the employment of staff in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider will check staff details every term to ensure everything is in date.

Outstanding references have been sourced and placed on the staff files.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written references viewed by the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(3)

The ratio of adults to children was maintained for the afternoon session. There were fourteen children aged between 3-5 years being supervised directly by two adults.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were not available to work directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection. During the morning session, 26 children aged between 3-5 years were being supervised directly by two adults.

(3)

The registered provider did not ensure that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained for the morning session, 26 children aged between 3-5 years were being supervised directly by two adults.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The number of children attending the morning session has been reduced to 22, therefore two staff is sufficient.

The registered provider stated no more than 22 children will be in each session.

A roll is taken at entry into preschool.

An emergency staff member is available to call if a staff member is off sick.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of attendance records for children in morning and afternoon sessions received.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 11(1)(3) have been adequately addressed.

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 of child

Children brought in a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches brought in from home were observed to contain a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, crackers and fresh fruit. Children's drink bottles were readily available in their lunch bags. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversations with each other. Staff engaged in conversation with the children during snack time.

Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary. Staff supported the children to wash their hands before snack time and when required throughout the session.

The children were observed to be enjoying free play with the toys and equipment available such as blocks and stickle bricks. A staff member read books to the children.

Supporting Relationships

Children's birthdays were displayed on the 'Birthday wall'. 'My learning Journal' books were maintained for each child which contained samples of children's artwork, as well as their interests such as 'things I love' and 'what Santa brought me'. Information and updates regarding the service are provided to parents at drop off and collection times.

Physical and material environment

Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling which were observed on the day of inspection. A range of books were available in the preschool room. Potted

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plants of 'lettuce' were in the preschool room with children's individual names on each pot that had been planted by each child.

An outdoor play area was provided at the back of the preschool and had a range of play equipment for the preschool children such as ride on vehicles, scooters, balance bikes and diggers. A playhouse with a slide and swings allowed for energetic gross motor 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 to the preschool was securely locked and controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored up on high shelves, out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were available in the wall mounted dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and after using the bathroom.

The preschool room and sanitary accommodation were well-ventilated with openable windows.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection. The fire assembly point was located to the side of the service in the registered provider's garden.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A child was observed to have popcorn for their lunch presenting a potential choking hazard. Staff did not take immediate action and remove the popcorn and return it to the child's bag.
2. Garda vetting was available for three staff members. However, one vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

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Infection Control:

3. There was no bin in the sanitary accommodation for the disposal of contaminated waste. Two bins were available in the preschool room with motion sensor lids; however, children were observed to open the lids of the bin with their hands when disposing of waste.
4. Perishable food items contained within the children's lunchboxes such as yoghurts and sandwiches were not refrigerated. There was no fridge available in the preschool for the storage of the children's perishable food snacks such as yoghurts and sandwiches.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A letter was sent to parents regarding popcorn no longer allowed in preschool. The healthy eating policy and a healthy eating letter for parents have been updated to include no popcorn.
2. An updated Garda Vetting application has been made for the out of date vetting for one staff member.

Infection Control:

3. A pedal operated bin was purchased for the sanitary accommodation. New batteries were placed in the sensor bins in the preschool room.
4. Lunches will be stored in the fridge onsite.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of letter sent to parents viewed.

Copy of email request for updated Garda Vetting.

Infection Control:

Photograph of new pedal operated bin in sanitary accommodation viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance for point 2, Garda Vetting renewal identified under Regulation 23 remains outstanding until a copy of the processed vetting disclosure has been submitted to the inspectorate.

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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.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- Contemporaneous records of children's arrival and departure times were not maintained on the record of attendance. The attendance record for children on the day of inspection did not accurately reflect the children in attendance at the service. The morning attendance record had 22 children listed however; 26 children were in attendance for the morning session and were not recorded in the attendance record.
 - Fourteen children were recorded on the afternoon attendance sheet with their arrival time as 12.15pm. However, children were observed to arrive before and after 12.15pm. Each of the 14 children listed on the attendance sheet were signed in before 12.15pm.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A handbook has been purchased, and every day when the children arrive their name and time of entry is recorded, and the same for collection.

Children in the afternoon session will not be allowed commence their session until 12:15.

Supporting documentation submitted

Daily enrolment sheets viewed by the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 24 has been adequately addressed.

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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)

One staff member was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises for the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the preschool room.

(b)

The First aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the service.

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.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 22 April 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment. The fire fighting equipment was serviced on 06 October 25.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

There was no record of annual maintenance for the smoke detection system.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Maintenance checks of the smoke detection system were completed on 20 May 2026 and 27 July 2026. This is booked in every year when they are checking fire equipment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Maintenance certificates received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been adequately addressed.

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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

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 22 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2027.

Non-Compliance Information

The insurance cover for the service was for a total of 22 children per session, however, there were 26 children in attendance for the morning session.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider now has 22 children per session as per the insurance.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 28 has been adequately addressed.