

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH037
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Name of Service:	Cuddles Creche
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Address of Service:	26 The Crescent, Deepforde, Drogheda, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A92 TAA0
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Name of Registered Provider:	Pamela Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	24
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

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Description of service

Cuddles Creche is one of two privately owned early years services operated by the registered provider, with this service conducted from a 2-storey premises located on a corner site in a residential housing development in Drogheda, and the second service is located in the mid-Louth area. This service currently operates from 7.30am to 5.45pm from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks each year, catering for a maximum of 52 children at any one time. Cuddles Creche accommodates pre-school children from 1 to 6 years of age. A school aged service is also provided. The service participates in the state-funded early childhood care and education (ECCE) scheme for eligible pre-school children from 9.00 am to 12.00 midday for 38 weeks each year. Two of the four care rooms in the service, namely the Toddler Room and the Playschool Room, are located on the ground floor of the premises, with a further care room provided on the first floor, namely the Montessori Room/School Aged Care Room. The fourth care room, known as the Treehouse, is operated from a separate single-storey wooden structure located to the rear of the premises. On the ground floor, the services cot room contains 5 standard cots, and also another room, which previously operated as the Baby Room, currently being re-purposed as a sleep room over the coming summer months. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider manages the service on a daily basis, supported by a team of 11 staff members. One of the 11 staff members is employed as an assistant manager, and one staff member is employed as a chef. The registered provider and all staff members, apart from the chef, work directly with pre-school children in the 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

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- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

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.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the registered provider, 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.*

(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, who is the registered provider, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, the designated person in charge or the named person in charge was on the premises.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff team.

(2) (a) (b) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on the inspection

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and through discussion with the registered provider onsite, it was determined that no new staff members had been employed since the last inspection. The references on file for 11 staff and the registered provider staff were compliant upon the service's last inspection; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection.

(c) Garda vetting for 10 staff reviewed upon the last inspection met regulatory compliance; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. A Garda vetting disclosure had been obtained for the two staff members whose vetting had expired since the last inspection. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) Employment records of 11 staff and the registered provider were reviewed at the services' last inspection, and regulatory compliance was achieved; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection.

(4) Documentary evidence reviewed at the last inspection for 10 childcare staff and the registered provider confirmed that the staff employed to work directly with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification for the cook is not required, as they are not employed to work with preschool children.

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,

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Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

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

Morning;

Two adults cared for 9 children aged 1 years 5 months to 3 years 2 months in the Playschool room, all of whom attended on a part time or full day care basis.

Two adults cared for 18 children aged 4 years 5 months to 5 years 1 month in the Montessori room, three of whom attended on a sessional basis and 15 attended on a part time or full day care basis.

One adult cared for 11 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 5 months in the Treehouse room, two of whom attended on a sessional basis and 9 attended on a part time or full day care basis.

The Toddler room was not in use on the day of inspection, and the children who normally attend the Toddler room were joined with the Playschool children for the full day.

Afternoon;

Two adults cared for 9 children aged 1 years 5 months to 3 years 2 months in the Playschool room.

Two adults cared for 15 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 5 months in the Treehouse room.

The Montessori room closes to preschool children at 1 daily and accommodates school-aged children for the remainder of the day.

In addition to the above, the registered provider and the deputy person in charge were covering in the care rooms where required.

(8) A review of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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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;*

Compliance Information

(1) A record in writing was kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (h) Details of attendance of each individual pre-school child who attends the service.
- (i) Details of a weekly staff roster, detailing their working hours and lunch break cover.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being were facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

Snack and meal times were observed to be relaxed. Children were provided with a buffet-type snack where they got to choose what food items to have, which included toast, cheese and melon. At dinner time, the children had a hot meal of pasta with sauce, and a choice of mixed veg and cheese. Cutlery and plates/bowls given to children were suitable for their age and stage of development, including forks for older children and spoons for younger children. The adults sat with and fed the younger children when required, whilst also encouraging their independence by giving them a spoon of their own. Drink bottles were available for children's use during the day. Older children were encouraged to use the toilet by themselves, and supports were provided when needed. Younger children who were recently potty-trained were provided with gentle reminders to visit the toilet. The

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younger children had their nappies changed at set times and also when their individual care needs required additional changes. The adults used the nappy changing times to engage in conversations with the children on a one-to-one basis. Aprons were available for messy play activities, and bibs were used at meal times for younger children. Rest areas were available in each care room to include a variety of child-sized sofas and seats, soft floor mats and cushions, where children could take time out to rest during their day. Some of the children were observed resting and relaxing in the rest areas and reading books. All children were observed to experience a change of environment and play outdoors on the day of inspection.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere in the care rooms on the day of inspection was warm, inviting and fun. The children were engaged in activities of their choice and were observed to explore their care rooms and play areas confidently. The children spoke proudly to the inspector about their home and preschool life, such as having a baby brother, saying their parents and siblings' names, about going on holidays soon and all about their recent preschool graduation. The children appeared content in their care rooms and played happily within designated interest areas, closely supported by staff. The children appeared familiar with the staff who cared for them and were observed to actively seek out them out when they required support. The children in each care room engaged well with their peers, and no disagreements were observed. The staff spoke softly and kindly to children within their care, and each care room had a calm atmosphere. The staff advised that “parent-teacher meetings” occur each preschool year after Christmas, and a ‘welcome evening’ happens around the end of September. The service welcomes parental involvement within the service, with recent visits to the preschool from a child's parent who is a dental nurse, to talk about dental hygiene. Other visits included parents coming in to read stories to the children. Communication with parents/carers is through in-person chats at arrival and collection times, and in addition to this, the use of written books for children's daily routines in the Toddler room. The staff in each care room worked well together, ensuring transitions from play to dinner to sleep time were smooth for the children present. Staff communicated well with one another, keeping each other informed for example, if they needed to take children to the toilet.

Physical And Material Environment

The care rooms were presented in many designated interest areas to include: rest areas and books, home corners with role play materials, construction areas, table top toys, chalkboards, creative areas, jigsaws and sensory materials such as sand, playdough, rice and pasta trays. Materials were freely available and accessible to children on low-level shelves and boxes at children's level, nurturing independence to retrieve and self-care to return. The

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tables and chairs in use on the day of inspection were suitable for the age and stage of the children in attendance. The display of children's recent artwork was on the room walls, inclusive of animals creations, weather art and Father's Day colourings. The children in the Montessori room enjoyed playing with sand, magnets, and colouring with stencils and stickers. The children in the Playschool room, which included children normally attending the Toddler room, enjoyed outdoor play and playing a "catch the bunny" game in the garden. The children in the Treehouse room, where children from the Montessori room joined in the evening, enjoyed sensory play with pasta and rice, floor play with magnets, resting and reading books, and writing their names and their family members' names to show the inspector.

The outdoor area is secured with high-level walls and fencing. A concrete path and a large area with impact ground surfacing provided a spacious area for the children to play. A large wooden climbing frame for children aged 3 years and over, and 2 smaller plastic climbing frames for children aged 3 and under were provided. Ride-on toys, see-saws and push-a-long toys were also available for children's use alongside two small playhouses.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

The premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. The garden area was secured by high-level walls, fencing and secured gates. A visitor log was maintained, which the inspector was requested to sign in upon arrival. Play materials and equipment provided for children's use were maintained in good condition. Risk assessments were available for review and completed up to date. The kitchen was accessible to the children. Handrails were provided on stairs and were suitable for children's and adult use. Storage areas were inaccessible to the children. Cleaning materials were observed to be stored out of reach of children. Fire exits remained free from obstruction throughout the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

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Warm running water, paper towels, hand soap and bins were provided for handwashing purposes. Children were observed to wash their hands before dinner, and after using the toilet or having their nappy changed. Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the services policy, and staff wore a disposable apron and gloves for each individual nappy change. Sanitary areas were ventilated with a mixture of openable windows, trickle vents and mechanical ventilation. Cleaning schedules were available for review, with daily records completed up to date, and the service was maintained in a clean manner.

Safe Sleep:

A cot room with 5 cots was provided for the use of the children attending the Toddler room. Individual bed linen laundered at least weekly was provided for each child. Sleep records were maintained for all sleeping children and detailed the date, child's name, cot room temperature, child's position, breathing pattern and skin colour while they slept. The recordings were made at 10-minute intervals.

Stackable beds were available for the use of the children attending the Playschool room. No children were observed to sleep on stackable beds on the day of inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection, the inspector observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance. In all three care rooms, staff members worked well together, ensuring that they were positioned to supervise all children within the care room. Similarly, in the outdoors, staff members positioned themselves strategically to ensure all children were in sight at all times. At mealtimes, staff members sat alongside the preschool children, offering support while also promoting the children's independence. Independence was encouraged at toileting, and staff members supervised those recently toilet trained by standing outside the door, maintaining dignity and respect and offering prompts and encouragement as required. Supervision during sleep time, where 4 children were observed to sleep in cots, occurred at ten-minute intervals when staff entered the room to check the sleeping children.

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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 registered provider had insurance cover in place for 52 pre-school children attending the service on a full-time basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2026 to 27 March 2027.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

Some of the wooden floorboards in the Montessori Room had become separated, creating four gaps. The location of the gaps in the floorboards was in a busy area, located next to the rest area, which could pose a trip hazard to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The flooring has been fixed and secured by adding an extra piece of flooring to the gap. The flooring is now fully fixed and secure. We will complete risk assessment forms each morning and check the flooring in each room to ensure it is safe for the room to be in use.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the floor area repaired.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted have adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 29 (d).