

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO032
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Name of Service:	Little Darlings Creche/ Playschool
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Address of Service:	31 Ashbury Lawn, Ballinode, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 EY62
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Name of Registered Provider:	Christine O'Carroll
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Killeen
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Little Darlings is a privately owned full day care early years' service, on the outskirts of Sligo Town. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 23 preschool children (maximum of 16 in full day care) as per the national register, ranging from 0 to 6 years of age. The service operates 5 days per week for 51 weeks of the year. School aged children are also catered for in the service.

Staffing

The registered provider is the person in charge and is involved in the daily operation of the service. There are four other adults working 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
- 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,15,23,26,27 and 29 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 and 25. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 record of a pre-school child.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

Part II - Registration and Register

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

- The service was found to be operating outside of their registration status on the day of the inspection. The service is currently registered to cater for 23 children attending on a sessional basis (a maximum of 3.5 hours) or 16 children attending on a full day care basis. On the of inspection there were 22 children receiving full/part-time care.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Following the inspection, we took immediate action and reduced the number of children in line with what we are registered for. Going forward management will ensure that the number of children the service is registered for are on the premises.

Supporting documentation submitted

- The register provider stated that they have reduced the number of children in the service in line with what the service is registered for.

Summary Comment

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (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) The registered provider ensured that.
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises for the duration of the inspection. On a review of staff attendance records the person in charge or deputy person in charge was always present in the service.
- (2) Discussion with the registered provider and a review of files showed that no new staff have commenced employment since the last inspection on 13 February 2025 when all staffs' files were reviewed. As the files were previously reviewed and found to be compliant section (c) Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed as part of this inspection.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) The registered provider did not ensure that the minimum ratio of adults to children were always maintained as follows.
- On the afternoon of the inspection in the toddler room one adult was supervising 13 children aged between two to four years of age. The correct ratio for children of this age is 1:6 adults to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)
The number of children on the premises have changed since our inspection. One member of staff was sick the day of inspection which left us over ratio on the day.

Supporting documentation submitted

- No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 11 has been adequately addressed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (a) *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:*
- (b) *the name and date of birth of the child;*
 - (c) *the date on which the child first attended the service;*
 - (d) *the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
 - (e) *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;*
 - (f) *authorisation for the collection of the child;*
 - (g) *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;*
 - (h) *the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
 - (i) *record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
 - (j) *written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*
- (3) *A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*
- (c) *an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. From the 12 sampled registration forms, all information was appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.
- (3) (c) The children's records were available and open for review by the inspectors as authorised persons.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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:

- On arrival to the service the external doors were secure to prevent an unauthorised person entering the service and children from exiting the service unnoticed.
- Cleaning products used in the service were securely stored so as to be inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- There was no evidence of hazards in the indoor or outdoor areas, toys and play equipment appeared in good repair and all electrical flexes and cables were in good condition and out of children's reach.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall wooden fencing and a bolted gate to prevent children from exiting unsupervised.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children attending the service.
- The staircase was fitted with a low-level handrail for children's use.
- Child safety gates were present in the hallway and the stairwell to prevent children from accessing the stairs unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- The pre-school rooms and adjoining sanitary facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Staff members were observed cleaning play areas and frequently touched surfaces after children's use and prior to snack time.
- Soap was readily available to children to wash their hands prior to eating, after both toileting and nappy changes. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks.
- Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.
- The care rooms and sanitary accommodation was adequately ventilated by way of openable windows or mechanical ventilation in cases where no window was available.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered during the day in one care room. On interview staff were knowledgeable about the steps to take when they must administer medication. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service not accessible to the preschool children.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had two designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children. No children were observed to sleep on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for five adults. However, two of the vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- Garda clearance for the two adults has since been renewed. Management will ensure that all staff folders are reviewed on a more regular basis to ensure required documentation is up to date going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Copies of the renewed garda vetting for two staff submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The register provider did not provide significant evidence to demonstrate that a person with a current and recognised first aid responder (FAR) qualification was available to the service. Documentation presented during the inspection consisted of an interim record pending the issue of official certification from the awarding body. As official certification had not been obtained or made available for review at the time of inspection, the inspector was unable to establish if the cert presented met the requirements for FAR certification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) We immediately contacted the company that completed the first aid training for approved certificates of complementation. Official certificates were sent to he registered provider. In future the registered provider will ensure that we receive relevant documentation when training is completed.

Supporting documentation submitted

- First aid responder (FAR) submitted for two staff.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) *any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) *the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (4) *A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 29/05/2026.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 10/10/2026 and the smoke detection system on 16/04/2026.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.
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Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider failed to ensure that pre-school children were adequately supervised at all times. During the inspection, staff member in the pre-school 2 room exited the room on three separate occasions to escort individual children to the bathroom. On each of these three occasions, the remaining children in the pre-school 2 room were left entirely unsupervised.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Going forward we will encourage toilet-trained children to use the toilet independently where appropriate while staff supervise from the nearby preschool room which is directly across from the toilet in our service. The goal of our service is to ensure that children are never left without appropriate supervision while still meeting individual children's toileting needs in a safe, respectful, and age-appropriate way. The registered provider communicated with staff the appropriate supervision of children in rooms while other children are toileting.

Supporting documentation submitted

- No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 27 has been adequately addressed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The premises appeared to be sound and stable structure. There were no observable indications of defects in the structure of the premises.
- (b) The premises was safe and secure. All exit doors were secured to prevent children leaving the facility unsupervised. All fire exits were unobstructed allowing for safe evacuation of the premises if needed.
- (c) There were adequate lighting and ventilation in all areas of the premises.
- (d) All areas were clean, well maintained and all play materials and equipment were in a proper state of repair. Detailed cleaning schedules for the premises were displayed on the walls of the rooms.
- (e) There were adequate sanitary facilities provided suitable for the needs of the children attending.