

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO037
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Name of Service:	Little People's Playworld Creche
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Address of Service:	Unit 3, Finisklin Industrial Estate, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 C2FF
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jackie Mahon
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	11/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	S Kileen N Toner
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

Little people's playworld Creche is a privately owned and operated preschool service located within an industrial estate in Sligo town. The service is registered for the provision of a full day care service for children aged between 0-6 years and operates from 7.30am to 6.00pm, Monday to Thursday and 7.45am to 5.15pm on Fridays. The facility is also registered to provide a service to school age children each afternoon. The service operates from a single-story building containing five care rooms, two sleep rooms, a dining room and a kitchen. A large, secure outdoor play area is located to the side and front of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and the person in charge of the service. There are an additional nine staff employed to work at the service. This includes a cook and eight childcare workers.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4)(7), 10, 11, 16 (k), 19, 22, 23, 27 and 32.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service and regulation 16 (k) – Records in relation to pre-school service.

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

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,*

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(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 named person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(b) A review of the staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or deputy person in charge were available at all times on the premises during the hours of operation.

(c) The person in charge confirmed that there was a clear line of authority within the service.

(2) (a)(b) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on the inspection and through discussion with the registered provider onsite, it was determined that no new adults had been employed since the last inspection on 20 June 2025. The references on file for nine staff were compliant upon the service's last inspection and found to be compliant; therefore, were not reviewed on this inspection.

(2)(c)(d) Garda vetting disclosures had been reviewed for six adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. International police vetting was reviewed on last inspection on 20 June 2025 and found to be compliant.

(4) On the last inspection, the required adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

For the purpose of this inspection, a sample of the required written policies, procedures and statements that are specified and required under schedule 5 of these regulations were reviewed.

The following policies, procedures and statements were included as part of this inspection and found to have the required components.

- (b) Policy on complaints.
- (c) Policy on administration of medication
- (e) Policy on managing behaviour.
- (f) Policy on safe sleep.
- (j) Policy on accidents and incidents.
- (k) Policy on healthy eating.

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the above policies were available and in operation in the service.

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 5 adults working directly with 33 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. Adequate staff were available during the inspection to work directly with the children and provide relief cover for breaks ensuring that adequate numbers of staff were always available.

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(2) The minimum adult to child ratios were maintained during the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

On the morning of the inspection the following was observed.

- Waddler (Wobbler) Room – Two adults cared for 6 children aged from 10 months to 2 years of age.
- Preschool Room – Two staff cared for 15 children aged from 3 to 5 years of age.

In the Afternoon

- Waddler (Wobbler) Room – Closed in the afternoon.
- Preschool Room – Four staff cared for 14 children aged from 3 to 5 years of age.

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:

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

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(16)(1)(k)

A sample of 14 records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information included all details of accidents, injuries or incidents involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(2) (b)

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The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain attendance records, medication records and accident and incident records for two years after the child the record relates to ceases to attend the service.

(3) All records were made available to the inspectors on the day.

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

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

(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

(1)(a)(b)

Basic Needs:

Nappy changing was observed to be an opportunity for positive engagement and interaction with the children which was observed on the day. Staff members used this time for one-to-one engagement with cuddle and laughter while respecting the dignity of the child. The older children who were toileting independently were prompted to do so and supervised from a distance. The younger children's basic needs were responded to in a prompt manner, noses wiped as required. Hands and faces cleaned after mealtimes and clothes changed if they were soiled, ensuring dignity was promoted.

Supporting Relationships:

Staff members were observed to be respectful, gentle, and kind in their interactions towards the children in their care. During mealtimes the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with children promoting a relaxed atmosphere. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves. The younger children were held and cuddled as needed throughout the day. Pictures of families displayed on the walls in the care rooms ensured children's connection to home was maintained.

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Physical Materials:

The care rooms were laid out to facilitate sensory experiences for the child through arts and crafts and sensory tables including water and sand play. Fine motor development was supported using jigsaws, puzzles and arts and crafts. Opportunities for imaginary and role play were provided in the home corner and dress up area as well as construction area and farm animal areas. Both care rooms were resourced with equipment suitable to the age and stage of development of the young children, including home corners, construction areas, animals, and musical instruments and soft toys. All equipment was stored on open shelving at children's heights so that choice can be facilitated.

The outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children. Children were observed moving throughout the different interest areas using gross motor skills on the various structures including slides, a wooden playhouse and slide including climbing ladder an outdoor kitchen and crafts table outdoor area. The external perimeter of the outdoor area is protected by a wooden fence. The outdoor area had a mixture of tarmacadam, grass and soft surfacing ensuring a soft surface for safer rough play.

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

Breakfast time in the service took place between 8:30am to 9:30am which was brought in from home and stored in the fridge. This consisted of fruits, sandwiches and yogurts. This is followed by an early dinner at 11.30am. Dinner on the day of inspection was bacon, vegetables, rice or potatoes in a creamy sauce. Further light snacks were provided later in the afternoon. The service has an onsite kitchen, and a hot meal is prepared daily for the children. A four weekly menu was available and included a variety of meal options. During the inspection, the dinner was observed in both rooms. Children sat together at suitably sized tables and chairs, and staff interacted positively with them throughout the meal. Children were encouraged to feed themselves, with staff offering support where required. All children had access to their drink bottles. Children appeared relaxed and engaged in conversation with each other while eating. Staff reported that the service maintains effective communication with families regarding healthy eating and actively promotes healthy food choices. Children were encouraged to take their time finishing their snack. When finished, they independently put away their plates and returned to play. Drink bottles were stored on an accessible shelf, allowing children to obtain drinks throughout the day as needed.

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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.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The entrance to the premises including the play area was secured to prevent preschool children from exiting the service.
- All internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- The kitchen which contained cooking facilities and hazardous items was not accessible to the children.
- The hot water provided at the children's wash hand basins was controlled to a safe temperature below 43°C for hand washing.

Infection Control:

- Children demonstrated good hand hygiene practices after using the toilet. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks.
- Staff were observed to clean tables before and after snack and dinner.

Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was administered on the day of inspection; however, staff advised the inspector of the correct procedure to be followed in the event of a child requiring medicine.
- Records of previously administered medication were available for review, and the correct details were recorded.

Safe Sleep:

- Children over the age of two years had availability of low-level stackable beds.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection to ensure safe evacuation in the event of a fire.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) A mat in the waddler room has become frayed and soiled. The frayed edges of the mat could pose a slip trip and falls risk to the preschool children.

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- (2) A thorn bush was protruding through the fence in the outdoor area, the bush had sharp thorns which could pose a risk of injury to the preschool children. It is acknowledged that the person in charge had the thornbush trimmed before the inspection had finished.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) The mat was removed on the day of inspection and new mat was purchased. Management will monitor this going forward.
- (2) The thorn bushes have been removed, and management will ensure that this area is maintained going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) Photographic evidence of new mat purchased submitted.
- (2) Photographic evidence of thorn bush removed submitted.

Summary Comment

The action as stated by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances found on inspection in relation to regulation 23.

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

Supervision was observed to be adequate indoors and outdoors on the day of inspection. Staff members were observed to communicate well with each other when moving in and out of rooms ensuring all children were accounted for. Staff members were observed to position themselves to ensure children were in view at all times while eating, playing and toileting.

In the outdoor play area, staff members ensured they were positioned to supervise the children from their room in the various sections of the outdoor space.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.
- (5) The requirement in paragraph (4) is without prejudice to any requirement to retain the record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) under any other enactment or rule of law.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- A complaints policy was in place in the service and adequately outlined the following;
- (a) Details of the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service.
 - (b) Details of how a complaint will be dealt with by the service.
 - (c) Details of the procedures in place outlining how the person who makes such a complaint in relation to the service will be informed of how the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2) (a) (b)
- The person in charge stated that no complaints had been made directly to the service since the last date of inspection.

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(3) (a)(b)

The person in charge stated they are aware of their obligation to detail the nature of any complaint made and the way it will be dealt with. The person in charge stated a record of any complaint made will be kept in the service and available for inspection on the premises.

(4)(5)

The person in charge in the service stated during discussions with the inspector they are aware of the statutory requirement to retain records for the required period set out in regulation.