

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH023
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Name of Service:	Scallywags Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Garrycastle, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 NP29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Keaney, Shelley Welton
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	21/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	31
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Inspection undertaken by:	C.O' Connor Hughes
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

Scallywags childcare service provides full day care, part time and sessional places to children aged between 0- 6 years. The service operates between the hours of 08:15 and 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis.

The Early Years' Service is located in an adapted dormer building. Five pre-school rooms namely the baby room, wobbler room and toddler room are located on the ground floor. A sleep room and a kitchen are provided. The junior pre-school room and the senior pre-school room are located on the first floor of the premises. An outdoor play area is located at the rear of the premises. The service is located in Garrycastle, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Staffing

The registered providers employ six adults. One of the registered providers, deputy person in charge and five adults were working directly with children on the 21 August 2026. The registered provider is responsible for cooking and preparing meals and snacks 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.

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Regulation 9- Management and recruitment - (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1)(2)(8)(a)

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

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and play (1)(a)(b)(3)

Regulation 21- Equipment and Materials

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking in and Out and Record of Attendance – (1)(3)(4)

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

Regulation 26- Fire Safety Measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 27- Supervision

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 32- Complaints (1)

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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Additional Information

The service has been engaging with a Quality Development Agency since November 2025.

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 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-

- (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,*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

One of the registered providers was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(c)

Upon discussion with the registered provider, it was ascertained that no new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 5 June 2025. A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the registered providers and five staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

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 in respect one staff member. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

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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.

(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,

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were thirty-one children supervised by six adults in the morning and in the afternoon. The registered provider was available to provide assistance in the pre-school rooms if required.

(8)(a)

Documentation reviewed indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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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-

(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)(b)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Staff used children's individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities and at mealtimes. Children were happy and content with their carers. The children were encouraged to be independent, and their choices were supported. Staff were observed to offer support and praise to each child for their involvement in activities. The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development. Good teamwork between the staff members was observed during the inspection.

The younger children slept in a restful atmosphere in the sleep room. Children slept on low level beds in the wobbler room supervised by staff. Regular nappy changes were carried out for children attending the baby room and wobbler room. Good communication with children and staff was observed during nappy changing. A baby who was having difficulty settling into the baby room was supported in a kind and caring manner by the staff member. Hugs and cuddles were given regularly and distraction methods used to help the baby get used to the new baby room environment.

Children were encouraged to be independent as they washed their hands before dinner supervised by staff members. Younger children's clothes were protected as they wore bibs while eating their main meal and aprons when painting. Older children were observed to use the toilet independently and wash their hands. At 12:00 approximately, children enjoyed the dinner consisting of fish fingers, potato, mixed vegetables and gravy presented by the registered provider. Extra helpings of food were offered to children who were hungry. Milk and water were offered with the main meal. Family style dining was observed in the senior pre-school room where children served themselves the portion of food they required. Plates, glassware and cutlery was used by the older children at mealtimes in both the junior and pre-school rooms.

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Children enjoyed freedom of movement as they played in the various interest areas in the indoor and outdoor environments supported by the staff members. Suncream to protect children's skin, sunhats and appropriate light clothing was worn by children when going to play outdoors. Small group activities were observed as staff interacted and joined in the children's imaginative and creative play activities.

The service communicates with the parents in the following ways; a verbal handover is given on collection. There is an open-door policy in place where parents were observed to bring their child into the pre-school room for drop off in the morning. A short messaging service (SMS) is used to give updates and information to parents. One to one telephone calls are made to parents as required. An introduction to the service is in place for new children to help settle them in at the start of the pre-school term.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

It was observed that the pre-school rooms environments had been renewed and replenished with suitable play and work equipment. The rooms were bright and colourful with posters and children artwork displayed. The children's interest areas included toys and equipment for construction, sensory play, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, home corners, imaginative and physical play.

(b)

The sleep room was equipped with six cots with the required safety mattresses in place. Suitable bed linen was noted in each individual cot. Low level beds were available for children over two years of age to sleep. Soft furnishings provided rest facilities in the pre-school rooms for any child who wished to avail of rest and relaxation.

(3)(a)

An outdoor play area was located to the rear of the service which was safe and secure surrounded by a high wall and fencing. A sheltered area was available for children's use. Toys and equipment included sand play, a doll's house, two toy kitchens, a large and small slide, tyres, a variety of bikes and trikes. A small storage shed was available to store toys and equipment.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

There was a variety of suitable and sufficient play materials and equipment to support children for various forms of creative, manipulative, sensory, imaginary and free play in the indoor environment in the service.

The tables and chairs were child sized suitable to each child's age and development. Equipment was well maintained, durable and easy to clean. Materials were accessible to children on low level open shelving and drawer units. Personal belongings and bags were stored individually for each child.

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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 service was secure. Access to the service is via a doorbell and a key code system at the main entrance. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival to the service.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Warm water, paper hand towel and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature recorded at the wash hand basins was 42 degrees Celsius.

The nappy changing procedure observed was carried out as per the service's nappy changing procedure. Children's nappies and creams were stored individually in the sanitary accommodation.

Soothers were stored correctly for children attending the baby and the wobbler room.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school rooms, the sanitary accommodation and the nappy changing room.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service. No medication was administered during the inspection. The medication documentation was available and reviewed. Correct procedures were in place for the administration of medication.

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Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in the sleep log and recorded every ten minutes. Staff were observed to physically check sleeping children from the baby and wobbler in the sleep room. Older children slept on low level beds in the wobbler room.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed on the ground and first floor of the service. Fire evacuation notices were displayed on the ground and first floor of the service. A pictorial fire drill procedure for children was displayed in the corridor on the ground floor of the service.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that the service does not undertake outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The most recent Garda vetting disclosure presented in respect of a staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

This non-compliance was previously noted on the inspection of 5 June 2025. The corrective and preventative actions submitted following this inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Immediately applied for and received Garda Vetting for the staff member.
Compiled a reminder list to apply for future Garda Clearance in good time.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Garda vetting for staff member.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed has addressed the non compliance and has met the Regulatory requirement.

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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.

that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by a staff member.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

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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)

All adults are qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises for the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

A fully equipped first aid box was available in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for the children in the pre-school 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 the 22 July 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 23 March 2026.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the pre-school rooms.

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

Children were supervised by the adults in the indoor and outdoor environments during the inspection. Younger children were supervised by adults when toileting and washing their hands on the ground floor of the service.

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 the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2027.

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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.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- The service's complaints policy was available and reviewed. The relevant details in respect of (a)(b)(c) were noted in the policy.