

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX087				
Name of Service:	Maple Tree Nursery				
Address of Service:	Ballyanne, New Ross, Co. Wexford				
Eircode:	Y34 Y866				
Name of Registered Provider:	Catriona Brennan, John Brennan				
Service type:	Full Day				
Date of Inspection:	22/06/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>63</td> <td>PM</td> <td>44</td> </tr> </table>	AM	63	PM	44
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford				
Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry C Ryan				
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

This full day care service is in a rural setting just outside the town of New Ross. The service caters for children aged from 6 months to 6 years. It is open from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 18:00. An Early Childhood Care and Education program (ECCE) is also provided. The premises is situated on the ground floor of the registered provider's home. The service consists of 5 preschool rooms, a nursery room for children aged from 6 months to 2 years, a playgroup room for children aged from 1 to 2 years, a preschool room for children aged from 2 to 3 years, junior ECCE room for children aged from 3 to 6, and a senior ECCE room also for children aged from 3 to 6 years of age. There are toilets, nappy changing facilities, a kitchen, one sleep room, a large hallway and access to a safe and secure outdoor play area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are 18 staff employed in the service including the registered providers. All staff working directly with the children were qualified in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework on the day.

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 the following regulations:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Regulation 9 Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 Staffing levels

Regulation 20 Facilities for rest and play,

Regulation 21 Equipment and materials,

Regulation 22 Food and Drink,

Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child,

Regulation 25 First aid,

Regulation 26 Fire Safety,

Regulation 27 Supervision,

Regulation 28 Insurance.

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 providers, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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)(b)

There are two managers employed in the service. The manager was the designated person in charge and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection. The registered providers were present in the service to facilitate the inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Following a discussion with the manager and on review of documentation, it was established that the service continued to employ the same staff since the last inspection. All written and validated references were available on file for staff working in the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(c)

There was Garda vetting available on file in the service for all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all staff.

(d)

Police vetting was available on file for four staff members who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

There were qualifications on file for all staff working directly with the children. These staff held awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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

(2)

At 10:30 there were 63 children aged from 1 to 6 years of age in the care of 13 staff.

At 14:30 there were 44 children aged from 1 to 6 years of age in the care of 10 staff.

The manager and the registered providers were also available in the service on the day of inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

All of the children attending the service had access to both indoor and outdoor spaces for play. The service consisted of five playrooms, a sleep room and adjacent toilets.

All of the playrooms were bright and warm with sufficient space for the number of children attending. The rooms were recently painted and redecorated meeting the needs of the age and stage of development of the children using them.

Children had access to the outdoor play areas located to the rear of the premises. The outside areas were fully enclosed and had sufficient space for the number of children attending. The areas were well developed and resourced with a variety of toys, equipment and materials for the children to use. The service had a large number of toy tractors and trailers that reflected the rural location of the service. The areas also included digging and sand pits, grassy areas for running, climbing frames, concreted areas for ride on toys and mud kitchen. All of the children enjoyed time outside on the day of inspection.

(b)

All children were facilitated to rest or sleep as needed. The sleep room had standard cots for the babies to sleep in. The playgroup room was large enough to section off an area to facilitate sleep for the older children on sleep mattresses. Both sleep areas were dimmed and restful for sleep and rest. All the rooms had a quiet corner for children to sit and relax which consisted of small sofas and cushions. These were suitable for children to rest and relax as and when they wanted. Of particular note was a small sitting room situated between the junior ecce room and the preschool room. This area had a large couch, chairs and bean bags. Staff who spoke to the inspector said children enjoyed taking time out in this room to relax during their time in the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

The playrooms were bright and warm with natural light and ventilation through openable windows. All of the playrooms had low open shelving with trays and boxes of toys. The materials which were easily accessible to the children. The tables and chairs were suitable to the ages of the children using them.

The rooms included home corners, jigsaws, puzzles, dolls house, blocks, loose parts, natural materials, open ended materials, small world, construction, art and craft materials and reading books. The children were observed fully engaged in their play and learning. Children from the Barn went for a walk in the field behind the service during the morning and they showed the inspector photographs taken on their last walk on the farm. The interactions between the children and staff were kind and gentle, and the staff were familiar with the individual children's likes, dislikes and personalities. For example, a staff member discussed how they worked in partnership with parents to support children transitioning rooms during the summer.

Throughout the rooms children's artwork was displayed along with current interests, photographs of their families, birthdays, curriculum plan and their daily routine. The atmosphere throughout the morning was calm and relaxed, with the transitions between activities effortless.

An information board in the entrance hall displayed service information for the parents. Parents were observed entering the premises to collect their children and speaking directly with the staff who cared for their child.

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

The service has a healthy eating policy in place. The service offers breakfast to children when they arrive in the service in the morning if required. Parents provided all snacks for the children which were stored in the large fridges in the service. The hot meal in the middle of the day is provided by an outside catering company and was reheated in the service. The children had sausages carrots potatoes and gravy on the day of the inspection. There were extra portions available if required. Children in the junior Ecce room were observed enjoying their morning

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

snack. Parents had provided a variety of food for the children such as diced vegetables, sandwiches, yogurts. Staff refilled the children's water bottles as was required.

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

Regulation 23 requires the registered provider to ensure the safety of the children while attending the service. The early years inspector reviewed this regulation through assessment of four areas:

General Safety:

The entrance to the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises throughout the inspection. Parents were observed to adhere to the service's instruction to ensure that the gate was closed at all times. The outdoor areas were fully enclosed to the rear of the house.

Cleaning agents and medication were stored out of children's reach. Emergency exits were unobstructed.

A sample of six accident and incident forms were reviewed and were fully completed and signed by parents.

Infection Control:

The toilets were equipped with warm water, liquid soap and hand paper towels. Children were observed being supervised with washing their hands before eating, after messy play and after toileting.

Administration of Medication:

There was an administration of medication policy. The staff discussed with the inspector the procedure to follow when a child required administration of medicine. A sample of four medication record forms including one individual health care plan were reviewed on the day and were completed in line with the service's policy.

Medication was stored out of reach of children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep checks were carried out every 10 minutes as stated in the service's safe sleep policy. The sleeping children's colour, breathing, and position was observed and recorded every 10 minutes. The temperature of the sleep room was maintained within the required limits at all times while the children were asleep.

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)
There was a person trained in a first aid responder course immediately available to the children attending the preschool service at all times. There were three staff trained in a first aid responder course working in the service.

(2)(a)(b)
There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position to the staff on the premises and was available to the children attending 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 firefighting 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)

There was a record of fire drills which had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was carried out in May 2026.

(1)(b)

A record was maintained of when the firefighting equipment was last serviced in October 25 and the smoke alarms in June 2026.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

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.

Compliance Information

The service ensured that the children were appropriately supervised at all times throughout the inspection.

All staff were suitably qualified and had extensive experience working directly with children. The child staff ratios were fully maintained in line with the requirements outlined under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. The service ensured that staff were inducted in line with the services recruitment policy, with staff appraisals and meetings taking place throughout the year. Evidence on staff files demonstrated that staff attended regular training days.

Supervision in the outdoor spaces:

The outdoor areas were designed to give children space and freedom. Staff actively supervised the children during outdoor play to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Each of the outdoor areas were fully enclosed allowing children the freedom within each of the spaces, balanced with the staff's ability to fully see children at all times. The staff discussed with the inspector measures in place to ensure the children's wellbeing and safety. For example, staff brought the older children on walks in the fields behind the service. They discussed how they managed this, carried out risk assessments and had a policy. Staff brought the inspector on a walk to the field that the children regularly went to. The staff were observed to regularly communicate between themselves. For example, they shared with each other when they were going indoors, bringing children to toilets or preparing for mealtimes.

Toileting:

Children were encouraged to use the toilet facilities independently and staff stood within hearing range while children used the toilets, available to help as needed and prompting children with handwashing.

During mealtimes:

During mealtimes the staff sat with the children. Children were encouraged to feed themselves independently and staff provided help and encouragement as needed. Mealtimes were relaxed, calm and sociable.

During sleep:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Children were monitored closely while sleeping and resting to ensure they were safe, comfortable, and breathing normally. Child staff ratios were maintained across the service during sleep and rest times. The service's practice was for staff to remain in the rooms with the children during sleep and rest periods.

Management of drop off and collection of children:

Parents and guardians were observed arriving at collection times. It was observed that each child was handed over individually to their respective parent or guardian by staff members. This time also provided an opportunity for parents and guardians to share information about their child's day. Parents were sent reminders to ensure that entrance gates are kept closed at all times.

Risk Assessments:

Risk assessments and checks were completed regularly to identify and minimise potential hazards within the childcare setting ensuring materials, equipment, and environments were maintained for a safe environment for all children. The outdoor area was checked regularly for hazards.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

There was insurance in place to cover the number of children who were present on the day of inspection.