

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX099
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Name of Service:	Puddle Lane Creche
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Address of Service:	4 Ballycanew Grove, Gorey, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y25 F9W7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Nolan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	21/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	24
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford.
Inspection undertaken by:	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).

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Description of service

Puddle Lane Creche and Montessori is a privately operated early years service. It is located in a residential house in Ballycanew village near Gorey. It offers full day care to children aged between 1 year and 6 years of age. The service operates from 07:45 to 18:15 Monday to Friday.

Staffing

The registered provider and manager are the designated people in charge. All the staff working directly with the children in the service held the minimum QQI level 5 and above qualifications in Childcare and Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4),

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),

Regulation 19 Development, Health and Wellbeing of the Child,

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,

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

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Regulation 26 Fire Safety (1) (a) (b) (4) and
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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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*

(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

Regulation 9 assesses whether the registered provider can demonstrate that effective management and recruitment structures are in place and appropriately qualified staff have been recruited to work with the children attending the service.

The early years inspector reviewed 11 staff files on the day of inspection. The documentation available demonstrated that the registered provider had carried out the necessary recruitment processes and vetting ahead of staff commencing in the service. All staff recruited were suitably qualified to work with children attending the service.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.

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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.

Compliance Information

Regulation 11 assesses whether the registered provider can ensure that an adequate number of staff are available at all times to meet the needs of the children as specified under the above regulation.

The early years inspector reviewed the number of children and staff present in the service at two different times during the day. The staff to child ratios were adhered to, to ensure the needs of the child were met during the day. The staff rota indicated all staff present on the day were rostered to work.

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

Compliance Information

Regulation 19 assesses whether the registered provider supports the health, wellbeing and development of the children while attending the service. The following observations and discussions with staff and children reflected the children's experience within the service on the day of inspection taking into consideration basic care needs, supporting relationships and the play environments.

Puddle Lane consists of three playrooms, a sleep room and toilets which are suitable for the children. The playrooms were bright and warm with natural light and ventilation through openable windows. All children had access to both indoor and outdoor spaces and suitable sleep and rest facilities.

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The facilities in each room were organised and individually decorated to engage the children in play, learning and activities appropriate to their different ages and stages of development. All playrooms had sufficient space for the number of children attending. The service had adopted a child led curiosity-based approach to decorating their rooms. This was reflected in the thoughtful selection of materials, equipment and toys which encouraged children to explore, investigate and engage in open ended and imaginative free play. The child led approach allowed the children to play and learn in a spontaneous and natural manner. The staff ensured invitations to play were set out to spark imaginative based play around the children's own interests.

Staff in the Hummingbird room work in partnership with parents to ensure each child experiences a warm and positive settling-in period. Before the child starts staff gather information about their routines, interests and care needs to provide consistent and responsive care. Settling-in visits are planned in collaboration with parents, allowing babies and young children to become familiar with the environment, daily routines and staff at their own pace.

Staff in the Eagle's room discussed how they work collaboratively with parents to support children during the toilet training period, ensuring continuity and consistency between home and the service.

Staff in the Hawke's room discussed how they operate a free flow play routine with the children. For example, the inspector observed that one staff member went out with three children who wanted to play outside, while the second staff member remained indoors with the children who wished to play inside.

The staff discussed with the inspector how they communicate and share information with parents. Parents have the opportunity to speak with staff about their child's day at drop-off and collection times. Communication also takes places throughout the day via the service's communication app where staff share information about the child's daily routine such as sleep and diet, activities, photographs and achievements, or any changes that may occurred during their day.

Each child has an individual learning journal that documents their learning and development over time, while in the entrance hall notice board provide parents with information about the menu, upcoming events, curriculum plans, policies and other relevant notices.

Transitions between the playrooms are planned in a child-centred manner that reflects each child's individual needs, interests, and stage of development. The staff discussed with the inspector how they support the children to move rooms during quieter periods, such as the summer months, and the move is done through gradual visits to their new age-group room, allowing them time to become familiar with the environment, routines, staff and new friends.

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The inspector found that children attending the service were settled, engaged in play and confident in their environment where their individual needs were responded to with kindness and respect. They demonstrated a strong sense of belonging, were relaxed and engaged freely in play, interacting positively with the staff and their friends. The inspector sat with the children in the Eagles room during their dinner and the children enjoyed telling the inspector about their creche, their new swing and what was their favourite dinner.

Children all enjoyed their carrot curry and rice, with many of them asking for second helpings. The mealtimes were relaxed and social occasions, food was served in bowls, with glasses of water served at the table.

The interactions between children and staff were kind and respectful, and staff demonstrated a good knowledge of each child's preferences and personalities. The inspector observed staff promptly tend to children if they were upset, provide assistance when needed, transitions between activities were calm and moments of fun and laughter were heard during the day.

All children enjoyed time outside on the day of inspection. The children were observed outside early morning and late afternoon to avoid excessive sun exposure. Sunscreen and hats were kept on the premises for the children and the staff discussed how they managed in warmer weather. For example, playing in shaded areas, water play activities and offering extra drinks to children.

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 door 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. The outdoor area was fully enclosed to the rear and side of the building.

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 staff and the parent.

Infection Control:

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The toilets were equipped with warm water, liquid soap and hand paper towels. Staff were observed to attend to children's personal hygiene throughout the day by cleaning their faces and noses as needed. Older children were observed to independently use the toilet and wash their hands during the day and had access to a self-care station in their rooms. Nappy changing areas were clean and well maintained and nappy changing practices were carried out in line with the service's policy.

The staff showed the inspector how soothers were cleaned and sterilised daily.

Administration of Medication:

The service had an administration of medication policy. The staff discussed with the inspector the procedure to follow when a child required administration of medicine. They were consistent and clear about the procedure ensuring safe administration of medicine to children. A sample of eight medicine record forms were reviewed on the day and were completed in line with the service's policy. Medication was stored out of reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

The staff discussed with the inspector how children's sleep needs are met while attending the service. Younger children slept in the sleep room which was off the Hummingbird room. There were standard cots and suitable bed linen available for younger children.

Older children had access to sleeping beds and the staff set up the beds in the rooms if children wished to sleep or rest during the day. The sleep room and sleep areas were dimmed, relaxing and conducive for sleep and rest. The staff were observed to physically check and record the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children every 10 minutes in line with good safe sleep practices.

The staff remained in the rooms with the children who slept on the sleep beds and monitored them during sleep and rest.

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.

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Compliance Information

Regulation 25 requires the registered provider ensure that sufficient staff are appropriately trained in first aid and available at all times to the children. Records reviewed by the early years inspector demonstrated that two staff were trained in first aid responder (FAR) and the staff files indicated that there were additional staff trained in paediatric first aid available to children. First aid boxes were observed readily available on the premises.

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

Regulation 26 requires the registered provider ensure that all staff are familiar with fire safety measures. Records assessed by the early years inspector indicated that staff received fire training and were familiar with the requirement to carry out monthly fire drills.

Maintenance records for the fire detection system and firefighting equipment were up to date.

Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The early years inspector observed that a valid insurance certificate was available.