

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024CC006
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Name of Service:	Darling Buds Preschool
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Address of Service:	Scoil Bhríde, Ashlin Road, Townparks, Midleton, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P25 R248
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Ward
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	9
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440.
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
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

Darling Buds Preschool was established in 2024 and operates as a play based, full day care service, with children aged 2 to 6 years accommodated. Options of part time and sessional care are also provided. Children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme are facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year. The setting is open 51 weeks of the year, with daily opening hours from 8.00am to 6.00pm.

Located on the outskirts of Midleton, in Co Cork, the service operates from two classrooms within Scoil Bhríde National School, namely the Glitterbugs room and the Jumping Jellybeans room. Adjoining sanitary facilities are available and the children also have the use of a sensory room, within the school. An outdoor play environment is accessible on site.

Staffing

There are 10 adults employed at the early years setting, all of whom are involved in the direct care of the children. This includes the registered provider and a relief staff member.

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

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN3484	04/08/2026	On review of the staff files, it was noted that the required police vetting from two separate countries was unavailable for one adult, who was not onsite.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions, which were accepted by the Inspectorate.	

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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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) The registered provider was the person in charge assigned to the service and a named deputy had been nominated to deputise, in her absence.
 - (b) The deputy was available at the setting when the inspection commenced and the registered provider arrived shortly after. Examination of the staff roster indicated that the requirement for a person in charge to be present for the duration of the service's operational hours, was met.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider, it was determined that six new staff members had been employed since the

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previous inspection, which was carried out on 5 December 2024. A total of six files were reviewed.

- (a) Twelve written and validated references were required in total and all 12 had been obtained from past employers.
 - (b) None of the references on file were from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the six adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Three police vetting records, with translations where required, were available on file.
- (4) Records demonstrated that four of the adults had achieved major awards in early childhood care and education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications and two adults had attained qualifications deemed to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d)
 - While it was acknowledged that police vetting was available for one adult who had resided outside the State, while over the age of 18, this document had not been translated into English, by a reputable source of translation.
 - See statutory notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN3484 served.
- (3) As per part (2)(d), two separate police vetting records and a translation into English for a third police vetting record, had not been obtained before these adults commenced their roles at the childcare facility.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (d) In her written response, the registered provider outlined that the employee was contacted immediately in relation to this and that the documentation was subsequently translated.
- (3) Going forward, the registered provider will ensure that all staff have the relevant vetting in place, before they begin their role at the service. It will also be ensured that if police vetting is in any language other than English, it will be translated by a certified translator.

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Supporting documentation submitted

A screen shot of the certified translation into English in respect of the police vetting.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was assessed and accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.

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) Throughout the period of inspection, an adequate number of adults were observed to work directly with the children in attendance.

(2) The requirements of the regulation in relation to the minimum ratio of adults to children were adhered to.

- During the morning, there were 10 children, aged 3 to 5 years, in attendance in the Glitterbugs room. Three adults were working directly with these children. The Jumping Jellybeans room was not in operation on the day of the inspection.
- In the afternoon, two adults were available to the nine children present, who were aged 3 to 5 years.
- The registered provider was also available to assist in the care room as needed.

(8)

(a) At least two adults were consistently available at the setting, while it was in operation. This was observed at

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the time of inspection and was demonstrated through review of the staff roster.

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

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- The facilitation of meals was appropriately timed to meet the children's needs. On the day of inspection, the mid-morning snack took place at 10.40am and the lunch meal was observed shortly before 1.00pm. During these mealtimes, conversation was encouraged, the atmosphere was notably relaxed and sufficient time was afforded to the children for eating and drinking.
- The children had consistent access to their reusable water bottles, which were stored on a low-level shelf in the care room.
- A box of tissues was within easy reach for the children, which encouraged them to develop personal hygiene and self-care skills.
- As the sanitary accommodation was located within the care room, the children could freely access and utilise these facilities independently. Verbal prompts and reminders were provided by the adults.
- Staff members ensured that the children wore protective aprons before beginning a painting activity.
- The spacious care room allowed children to enjoy freedom of movement, as they participated in their chosen activities and followed the daily routine.

Supporting relationships:

- The children appeared interested and engaged as they explored their environment, for example, when participating in active play in the sensory room and during free play in the main care room.
- Staff were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness when responding to an upset child; the child was supported to express their perspective and was offered appropriate comfort and reassurance by the adults.

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- Inclusivity was promoted across the daily routine, with children encouraged to participate and acknowledged for their interests, views and efforts.

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-

(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)
- (b) The Glitterbugs room was furnished with a generously sized cosy area, which was accessible for any child who wished to avail of a quiet space to rest and relax. This area consisted of soft floor mats, cushions, cushion seats and a well- stocked book rack. Six sleep mats and bed linen were held in storage for children who may require sleep while in attendance.

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 windows in the care room were adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children.
- There were no cables from electrical equipment within the children's reach.
- Safety clips were in place to secure blind cords.
- Within the care room, a safety gate was fitted at the entrance to the kitchenette area, which reduced the risk of a child gaining access.

Infection control:

- Warm water and dispensers of liquid soap and paper towels were easily accessible at the children's wash hand basins. A foot pedal operated bin was also in place. The children were observed to wash their hands after messy play and both staff and children were noted to wash their hands before the mid-morning snack.

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- The children's personal belongings were appropriately stored on individual wall hooks.
- The children's perishable snacks were refrigerated prior to consumption. This ensured that such foods were maintained within the safe temperature range of 0°C to 5°C.
- Open windows in the care room allowed for natural ventilation, as the children played indoors.

Administration of medication:

- Medication maintained in the service was stored safely out of the children's reach, appropriately labelled and was in-date.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were unobstructed during the inspection.
- Wall mounted storage was provided for firefighting equipment.

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.
- (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.

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection, each of the children present were checked into the service. A sample review of attendance records, dated between 1 July and 31 July 2026 also confirmed this practice.
- (3)
- (a) The registered provider confirmed that only those listed from (i) to (iv) above could access the service without their entry being approved by an employee.
 - (b) Visitors to the setting were required to document their visit in a sign in book, that was maintained specifically for this purpose.

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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) The registered provider had ensured that a person with up to date First Aid Response (FAR) training, was available to the children throughout the hours of operation. FAR certificates were on file in respect of four of the staff members.
- (2)
- (a) A first aid kit, which contained a sufficient stock of first aid supplies was readily accessible by adults in the Glitterbugs room.
 - (b) The first aid supplies were available at all times, when the service was in operation.

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) Monthly fire drills were recorded on a digital application, which indicated that a fire drill had been undertaken on 14 July 2026.
 - (b) Documentation provided by fire safety companies demonstrated that the firefighting equipment had been serviced on 20 January 2026 and that the smoke alarm was last tested on 10 April 2026.

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(4) The steps to be taken in the event of a fire were set out in a written notice, which was displayed in the care room.

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

Good supervision practice was ensured by staff throughout the daily routine. This included when children were walking to and from the sensory room, during free play, tabletop activities, mealtimes and while children undertook self-care tasks, such as handwashing.