

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024DL003
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Name of Service:	Child Led
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Address of Service:	Tawnalary, Donegal, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Graham Porter
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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	27	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Killeen
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

This privately owned and operated preschool service is located on the outskirts of Donegal Town adjacent to another large full day care service operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to provide full day care to children aged 1-6 years of age and operates between the hours of 8.00am and 5.30pm. The premises consists of two detached buildings, each one equipped with a care room, sanitary accommodation and storage facilities. One of the buildings, the little wonderers, cares for younger children aged 1-2 years and has a designated sleep room. The second building, curious minds, cares for older preschool children aged 2-5 years.

Staffing

A total of 13 adults are employed to work in the service 9 of which were present on the day of inspection. The 13 adults include the register provider, person in charge, office administrator and nine adults employed to work directly with the children. Additionally, the service employees a maintenance person. The register provider is supernumerary but is available to cover breaks as needed.

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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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

9(1) (a) (b) (c) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d), (4), 11 (1) (2), 15 (a-i) (3), 20 (1) (a) (b), 23, 24 (1), (3) (a) (b), 25 (1) (2) (a) (b), and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 record of a per school child and 24 checking in and out and record of attendance.

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 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*
 - (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,*
 - (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) The registered provider ensured that.
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person to deputise in the event of their absence.
 - (b) The designated person or named deputy were rostered to be present at all times during the operation of the service.
 - (c) Information on the service's management structure was provided during the inspection identifying the lines of authority, roles and responsibilities of employees. The service also had management and staff structure displayed on notice boards outside both care rooms.

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- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that five new adults had been employed since the previous inspection. 28 November 2024. Five of the appointed adults work directly with the children. A total of five files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for one adult whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.
- (a) Nine written validated references from past employers for five of the adults were on file.
 - (b) One written validated reference from reputable sources for one adult was on file.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for six adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting from police authorities in another state was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.
- (4) Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications was on file for five adults who required it.

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.*

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Compliance Information

- (1) There were an adequate number of adults caring for the pre-school children on the day of the unannounced inspection.
- (2) The minimum adult-to-child ratios were maintained throughout the inspection. On the morning of the unannounced inspection, the ratios were as follows.

- In the Little Wonderers room: 3 adults caring for 12 children aged 1-3 years.
- In the Curious Minds room: 2 adults caring for 15 children aged 3-4 years.

When assessed in the afternoon, the following was observed.

- The little wonderers room: 12 children were being cared for by 3 adults.
- The Curious minds room: 10 children being cared for by 2 adults.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (1) *A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

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(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) (a-i)

Twelve records of the preschool children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and details of the child's general practitioner, were fully completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year's inspector.

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)

The two care rooms are adequately equipped to provide a full day service to preschool children. The large rooms are designed considering movement of the child ensuring clear pathways and space between interest areas. The interest areas are set up to stimulate the imagination of the preschool child. Opportunities for sensory play are provided with water and sand tables, which the children have free access to for the duration of the session. Opportunities for role play and creativity are provided with home corners, dress up areas and construction areas. Children were observed to use building blocks and magnets to create buildings and farms. Fine motor development is facilitated through pin boards, jigsaws and puzzles. Language development is supported through and extensive library and music.

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The outdoor area provides an extension of learning. Both care room open out to a secure play area with a variety of ground covering to include artificial grass, wood chipping and tarmac ensuring all the children regardless of mobility could enjoy the outdoor area. This outdoor environment has been designed to ensure that children are safe while promoting imagination and creativity. A climbing frame with slide, swings and tyres allows for risky play and gross motor skill development. A purpose-built mud kitchen, potion making area with resources and home area provides opportunities for role play. Enclosed sand areas allow for sensorial play in all weathers. A variety of bikes, trikes, tractors, building blocks, tunnels and provides an opportunity for children to develop their balance, agility and coordination.

(b)

A dedicated rest area in both rooms is provided in the form of a child size couches soft floor covering and cushions. This area allows for children to rest and take a break throughout the session. A dedicated sleep room was available with standard cots available for children aged two years and under. The service also provider floor beds for older children who required them for rest.

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 implements a healthy eating policy, providing a daily menu that includes breakfast, snacks, lunch, and dinner. While parents have the option to send additional snacks, the service actively reminds them that these items must be nutritious and align with the services healthy eating policy.
- Staff members in the pre-school rooms confirmed that balanced, nutritious meals and snacks are provided daily. A review of the three-week menu plan confirmed this. On the day of inspection, the main meal served consisted of mince, potatoes, vegetables, and gravy. Notably, alternative dinner options are available to accommodate individual child preferences; for instance, a child who declined the main meal was provided with an alternative of chicken curry. Additional portions were offered to the children.
- Due to the hot weather conditions, children maintained regular access to individual water bottles, which staff were observed refilling regularly throughout the session.

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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:

- On arrival to the service the external doors were secure to prevent an unauthorised person entering the service and children from exiting the service unnoticed.
- The outdoor area was secured with wooden fencing and a bolted gate to prevent children from exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning products used in the service were securely stored to be inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- Risk assessments on indoor and outdoor play areas were completed daily and noted to be maintained up to date. There was no evidence of hazards in the indoor or outdoor areas, toys and play equipment appeared in good repair and all electrical flexes and cables were in good condition and out of children's reach.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Highchairs within little wonders room were fitted with a 5-point safety harness and were in good sate of repair.

Infection Control:

- The pre-school rooms and adjoining sanitary facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up to date cleaning schedules outlining appropriate cleaning methods and the various areas to be cleaned within the playrooms and sanitary accommodation were available.
- Staff members were observed cleaning play areas and frequently touched surfaces after children's use and prior to snack time.
- Soothers were stored individually with children's names on them.
- Thermostatically controlled water, soap and hand dryers was readily available to the pre-school children to wash their hands prior to eating, after both toileting and nappy changes. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.
- Aprons and gloves were available and observed in use by staff when changing of a child was required.
- The care rooms and sanitary accommodation was adequately ventilated by way of openable windows or mechanical ventilation in cases where no window was available.

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- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection. On discussion with the staff members, they were knowledgeable about the service medication policy. Medication consent forms were in place and administration record templates were available if the service required them. The inspector reviewed a sample of administration of medication records and found that these had been completed in adherence to the service policy. Support plans were available for the children who required them for the administration of specialised medication and a clear protocol to follow.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had one designated sleep room with 14 appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.
- Standard cots were available for babies under two years of age.
- Stackable floor beds were available for children over two years of age.
- All standard cots had the required waterproof coverings and cellular blankets were provided.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

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.

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Compliance Information

- (1) The service demonstrated that all children are checked in on arrival and checked out on departure. A record of these times is maintained in the service.
- (3) (a) (b) On the day of the inspection, the Room leader authorised entry of the inspector and recorded this visit in the visitors 'log.

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 demonstrated with certification that eight adults were trained in (FAR) first aid responder training. A review of the roster demonstrated that there was a person with first aid for children available at all times to the children attending the service.
- (2) (a) (b) First aid boxes sufficiently resources with suitable equipment were stored in a conspicuous position available to children as required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service provided certification of insurance for a full day care service for 45 preschool children valid from 28/03/2026 up until 27/03/27.