

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024KE004
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Name of Service:	Cookies Early learning Centre
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Address of Service:	Aughamore, Loughbollard, Clane, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 XPV3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Megan Cooke-Smith
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	22/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	58
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co Kildare
Inspection undertaken by:	F Carty and R Flynn
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Cookies Early Learning Centre is a privately owned childcare facility and one of four services operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years. An option of sessional, part time and full day care is available. Sessions are over a 38-week annual period, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service is open from 7.30am to 6.30pm.

The service is located in Clane, Co Kildare and operates from a purpose-built facility. The service comprises of five care rooms, two designated sleep rooms, a sensory room, an outdoor area to the rear of the building and two further smaller outdoor areas to the front of the building.

On the day of inspection five rooms were open to preschool children. Dréolin for children aged 1- 2 years, Spideóg for children aged 2 years, Éin Mhuire for children aged 2 - 3 years, Feiliceán for children aged 3 – 5 years and Iora Rua for children aged 3 – 5 years.

Staffing

The service employs a total of 28 staff including a manager, cook, 23 preschool staff and three school age childcare staff. There were 22 adults present on the day of inspection including the registered provider and the aerial manager, 19 childcare staff and a cook. The aerial manager and registered provider were present for the duration of the inspection.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, information and records, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 -Management and Recruitment,

Regulation 11 - Staffing Levels,

Regulation 16 - Record in relation to pre-school service,

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child,

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

Regulation 27 – Supervision.

Regulation 31 – Notification of incidents

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 (1)(k).and (19)(1)(a) As a result, the scope of the inspection included Iora Rua and Dreolin.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Additional Information

The inspection was triggered by information received by the Inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN3601	22/06/2026	Police vetting was not available for one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period longer than 6 months as an adult.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.	
Improvement Notice IN3343	22/06/2026	A hanging cord was noted in the sleep room within reach of where a child was sleeping.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.	
Improvement Notice IN3345	22/06/2026	The temperature in the sleep room where children aged 1-2 years old were sleeping was above the recommended temperature.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.	
Improvement Notice IN3344	22/06/2026	The fence in the outdoor play area did not provide adequate security. The fence had large gaps and was not high enough to prevent unauthorised entry or children exiting the service.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.	

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*
- (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.*

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

*(b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
(c) these Regulations.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

The inspection focused on the recruitment records for 14 adults employed since the last inspection on 16th April 2025. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults who were present and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b)

Of the 28 validated, written references that were required, 21 were available from a past employer and three were available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the fourteen adults. The service also adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Translated international Police vetting was available for two adults who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as an adult.

(4)

Records were available evidencing that ten staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent.

(7)(a)(b)(c)

Evidence was available to demonstrate that the registered provider ensured that all employees, were appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information and training on the policies, procedures and statements of the service, Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and these Regulations.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

Please see Statutory Notice in relation to Immediate Action Notice IN3601 served.

(2)

(a)(b) Two required references had not been obtained for two staff members prior to them commencing work in the service.

(3)

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had not been carried out prior to four staff members commencing employment in the service as follows:

- There was no evidence to demonstrate that two staff members had not lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as they had no Curriculum Vitae on file.
- Two required references had not been obtained for two staff members.
- Three references had not been adequately verified prior to the staff commencing work in the service.

(4)

It could not be demonstrated that two staff members held the required qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

Both references were obtained and validated on the day of the inspection. Both employees only had one previous employment, were waiting on references from other approved bodies. For staff who are younger and haven't had previous employment or more than one previous employer, we will give them a list of approved sources of second reference at the job offer stage prior to commencing employment.

(3)

Two CVs are now back on file in office.

(4)

We received DCEDIY recognition that proof of qualification & college letters were sufficient in lieu of official qualification certification, while they await graduation. These were added to staff files.

Going forward, we will ensure that proof of qualifications & a letter from the college are in place before a staff member commences employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) Copies of additional references sought were submitted.

(3) No evidence submitted.

(4) Evidence of equivalence of qualification submitted.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the evidence submitted were reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 9.

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services were adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 69 children attending the service being supervised by 16 adults on the day of inspection.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(k) A sample of 20 accident and incidents records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

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)

Meals were provided at regular intervals and drinking water was available to children throughout the day. A hot lunch was served from 11.00am. Staff sat with children during their dinner and children were encouraged to feed themselves. Younger children in the Dreolin room wore bibs to protect their clothing during mealtimes. All children were given water with their meal. Staff supported children who needed assistance with their meals. Additional servings were available in the care rooms and staff were observed providing additional portions to children who requested more.

Children's care needs were observed to be met promptly. Staff were observed cleaning children's noses as required and children's hands and faces were cleaned after dinner.

Children's nappies were changed regularly, and staff were observed engaging warmly with children when providing this care.

An area was provided within the rooms where the children could rest or take a break from activities. Children were placed to sleep when they displayed signs of tiredness. Suitable cots were provided appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. All children were made comfortable for sleep; staff removed children's

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

shoes and outer clothing; they provided the children with blankets, and they offered soothers to those who used them.

Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children. Children were comforted promptly when they became upset. Staff were observed to use distraction, gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service's behaviour policy.

The staff described how they communicate with parents daily about their child at arrival and collection times detailing information on food, sleep and nappy changes. Parents were observed in the service during drop off and collection times.

A fully enclosed outdoor play area was located to the side of the premises and had shock absorbent surfacing. A range of developmentally appropriate play equipment was provided in the outdoor play area. Staff were observed engaging with children in the outdoor area and supporting them in their play

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 door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Cleaning agents and medicines were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing.
- Individual bed linen was provided for children and was stored separately when not in use. Staff stated that bed linen is laundered weekly or as required.
- All cot mattresses in use had waterproof covers.
- Soothers were stored in individual containers.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Administration of Medication:

- There was a documented care plan available for two children attending the service who required emergency medication. Staff working in the room with the child were aware of the treatment plan and demonstrated knowledge of the procedures to follow if the medication was required.
- Staff demonstrated, through discussion, that they were familiar with the procedures and practices in place for the administration of medication in line with the services policy on medication administration.

Safe Sleep:

- There were two designated sleep rooms with a total of eight cots. Low level sleep beds were available for children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. A log was maintained where the temperature of the room, the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children was checked every 10 minutes. Staff were observed to conduct checks on the children sleeping every 10 minutes.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits were clear of obstruction.
- Regular fire drills took place in the service, staff stated that they occur monthly

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was a plastic box being used in the outdoor area of Iora Rua room which was broken and had sharp edges which could pose a risk of harm to the children.
2. A child was observed touching pieces of wood which had protruding nails which poses a risk of injury.
3. Please see Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN3343 served.
4. Please see Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN3344 served.

Infection Control:

5. There was a white leather sofa in the Iora Rua room, which was torn, it cannot be cleaned effectively poses a risk of cross contamination.
6. Children were observed playing with stagnant water in the Iora Rua outdoor area, this poses a risk of cross contamination.
7. Children's hands were not washed in the Iora Rua room prior to snack or lunch time. This poses a risk of cross contamination.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Box disposed of. Morning and evening manager checklist on top of class risk assessment.
2. Piece of equipment has been removed and disposed of, removed during inspection.

Infection Control:

5. New one purchased, old one disposed of. Staff CPD training on health and safety procedures completed.
6. Staff member spoken to about using fresh water. Point of reference in CPD training for health and safety.
7. Spoke to staff about importance of hand washing. Point of reference during CPD training health and safety.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

No supporting documentation submitted.

Infection Control:

5. Copy of invoice for new sofa purchased submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the evidence submitted were reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 23.

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

On the day of inspection all children were observed to be adequately supervised.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c)

See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN3545 served.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.

Compliance Information

(e)

The registered provider notified the agency in writing of an incident which occurred where a preschool child left the service unattended.