

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Tusla Identifier:	TU2026KY001
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Name of Service:	Curious Minds Ballincrossig FDC
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Address of Service:	Ballincrossig National School, Ballincrossig, Ballyduff, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V92 AP80
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Sheehy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	01/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	3	PM	None
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Áras an Phobail, Deans Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Inspection undertaken by:	N. Reidy & M. Burke
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).

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Description of service

Curious Minds in Ballincrossig is located near the rural village of Ballyduff Co Kerry. The service opened in March 2026, and is one of 8 services run by the Registered Provider. The service is registered as an early years service, to provide sessional, part-time and full day care for children from two to six years. It is also registered as a school age service. Its operating hours are between 7.00 am and 6.00 pm Monday to Friday inclusive. The service consists of one spacious room, located in the back of Ballincrossig National School. The children's sanitary room consists of two toilets and two wash hand basins and nappy changing facilities. The adult sanitary area consists of one toilet and one wash hand basin. The outdoor play area is secured by wooden fencing and is separate from the school's playground.

Staffing

On the day of the inspection, five staff members were identified as working in the service. This included the registered provider, an area manager and three early years practitioners, of which one is also the person in charge. The registered provider and the area manager are not service based.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, area manager and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN	01/07/2026	(9) (2) (d) International Police Vetting was not available for one staff member who had access to children.
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*
- (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)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge. A deputy person in charge was available to deputise if the person in charge was not present.
 - (b) The person in charge was working at the service when the unannounced inspection commenced and remained present during the operation of the service.
- (2)
- Five staff files were reviewed. Three new staff members work directly with the children. The remaining two staff members included the registered provider and the area manager. On the day of inspection, a total of five staff files were reviewed.

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- (a) Ten written and validated references were required in total. Seven written and validated references were provided by past employers.
- (b) Three written and validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4)
- Records demonstrated that three staff members working directly with children had a minimum of Level 5 or above in Early Childhood Education and Care qualification as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (c) During discussion with the staff member on inspection, it was not clear who was the designated deputy person in charge of the service
- (2)
- (d)
- See statutory notice section in relation to an improvement notice IN 3182 served.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (c) The Designated person team member was reminded of the Team as a whole. The designated deputy person in charge of the service remains the same.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The requirement for the regulation is met.

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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.

(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) At the time of inspection, it was observed that there was an adequate number of staff working directly with children.

(2)

On the day of the inspection, the adult to child ratio was in adherence to the requirements of the regulation. There was one staff member caring for three children aged between one and five years attending the service on a sessional basis.

Non-Compliance Information

(8)

(a)

The registered provider did not ensure that two staff members were on the premises at all times during the hours of operation. The staff roster demonstrated that for example, on 22/06/'26 one staff member was rostered to work from 9.00am to 2.00pm, on 25/06/'26 and 27/06/'26 one staff member was rostered to work from 09.00am to 2.30pm.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(8)

(a)

The staff roster was altered prior to the inspection, as parents were figuring out the hours they required for their children attending the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Records of staff rosters that demonstrate two adults are working in the service during the current hours of operation.

Summary Comment

All documentation received was examined. The requirement for the regulation has been met.

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

Basic Needs:

- The children were observed to have opportunities to play between the indoor and outdoor areas during the course of the inspection.
- The children were observed moving about freely in the playroom and in the outdoor area playing with activities of choice.
- The children were observed to be comfortable and familiar with their surroundings and with the staff member providing care to them.
- The parents/guardians of the children attending provided the food.
- The children were observed having a mid-morning snack consisting of sandwiches, crackers, a selection of fruit and yogurts.
- The children had plenty of time to eat in a calm and pleasant atmosphere during the snack time.

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- The staff member sat with the children, assisted the children as needed and engaged in social conversation with the children.
- The staff member encouraged and reminded the children to take drinks during the session.
- The children who were toilet trained were observed independently using the toilet located outside of the playroom. The staff member was available to provide assistance if required.
- The staff member carried out nappy changing for the children who required it in a timely manner.
- The staff member carried out nappy changing in a kind and caring manner, communicating with the child and explaining the routine.
- The children were observed to wash their hands after nappy changing.
- There was a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and paper towels available for the children for effective handwashing.
- A quiet area was available in the indoor playroom for children to rest and relax. This consisted of consisting of a spider tent, rugs, cushions and a selection of foldable vinyl matting.
- A record of a care plan was in place and accessible to guide staff practices.

Supporting relationships:

- Each of the children had their own coat hook with their photographs displayed over each one to encourage their self-help skills and independence.
- Family photos were on display in the playroom to support and promote a sense of identity and belonging in the service.
- The staff member spoke to the children in a calm and relaxed tone of voice, at their level when speaking with them.
- The staff member provided support and re-assurance to the children as needed.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The indoor playroom was adequately equipped with suitably sized tables and chairs, for the children's use during seated activities and mealtime routines.
- Low set, open shelving allowed the children to freely access a selection of developmentally appropriate materials. For example:
 - interest items such as plastic bricks, wooden blocks and a garage set, accommodated gross motor development.
 - a play kitchen, with an adjacent supply of utensils and play food, encouraged social and emotional development.

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- art and craft supplies promoted mark making and creativity supported the development of fine motor skills.
- jigsaws, connectable shapes and magnet tiles supported the development of fine motor skills.
- The outdoor play environment was spacious and consisted of a concrete surface. It was surrounded by the neighbouring school's garden planters and colourful wall murals, providing a calm environment close to nature.
- The available equipment offered opportunities for active play, exploration and gross motor development. For example:
 - plastic ride on toys, a wooden climbing frame, a sandpit area with beach toys and an equipped mud kitchen area.
- In addition, there were coloured seats for children to rest during play.

Programme of Activities:

- Children's emerging interests were recorded on the whiteboard as prompts when planning activities of interests to the children.
- Nature murals of a caterpillar and butterfly were evident. In addition, there were visual wall displays of the weekdays, months and seasons.

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 playroom entrance door with a high- level closure was maintained secure to prevent children exiting unsupervised during the course of the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored out of reach of children.
- The children's individual creams, wipes and plastic bags with nappies were stored out of the reach of the children in the nappy changing room.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed with timber fencing and a secure gate.
- The emergency exit doors were not obstructed.

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Administration of Medication:

- The inspectors were informed that the children in attendance on the day of inspection were not in receipt of medication.
- The medication observed on the day of inspection was in date and stored in a secured low-level cupboard.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The main entry door of the building was open on the inspector's arrival to the premise. There was a key on the outside of the playroom door. Not restricting unauthorised access to the service poses a risk to the children.
- There was a leaking pipe from a washbasin in the children's sanitary room, resulting in a pool of water on the floor posing a slip hazard and a risk of injury to children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

- The team were reminded to always remove the key.
- This issue was fixed by the maintenance team on the afternoon of the inspection. The team has reported it on the day prior to the inspection and maintenance was booked. There is a maintenance logbook now in operation.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- The statement is accepted as evidence.
- The statement is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The requirement for the regulation has been met.

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

- (1) The person in charge held a current First Aid Response (FAR) certificate, which was valid until 17 April 2027.
- (2)
- (a) (b) A suitably stocked first aid box was safely stored on a high-level shelf in the main care room, out of reach to children, but accessible to adults to administer treatment if required.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- .

Compliance Information

- (a) Visually the premise appeared to be sound and stable.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
- Some of the walls inside the children's sanitary accommodation and beneath the children's coat hooks in the area outside the sanitary accommodation had visual signs of mould. These areas were not cleaned and maintained as required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d) The walls have been treated and repainted. The issue was also raised with the school's board of management. There is a weekly checklist in place.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of the re-painted walls.

Summary Comment

The requirement for the regulation has been met.