

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN036
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Name of Service:	Little Buds Childcare
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Address of Service:	38 Main Street, Mullagh, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	A82 C6P4
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Name of Registered Provider:	Bernice Gardiner
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath.
Inspection undertaken by:	D.Murray & S.Mc Kenna.
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

Little Buds Childcare provides full day care, part time and sessional care to children aged 2-6 years and operates from 08:00am to 6:00pm Monday to Friday. Children who are eligible can participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. A school aged service is also provided.

This service is located in a converted dwelling and consists of the following rooms:

Downstairs:

ECCE Room 1 provides care and education to children from 2 years 8 months to 3 years.

ECCE Room 2 provides care and education to children from 3 to 5 years.

Tiny Buds Room (full day care) facilitates the care of children from 2 to 5 years.

ECCE 1&2 rooms accommodates school aged children in the afternoons.

Upstairs:

The rooms upstairs are used for school aged children only.

Other facilities in the service are sanitary facilities, with an office and kitchen upstairs.

An outdoor space is located to the rear of the premises and can be accessed from the 3 care rooms downstairs.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager, deputy manager, 10 childcare staff, 2 school aged staff members, 1 administration staff and a chef. The registered provider is available in the service and provides support to the staff members 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

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- 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.

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, manager, 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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Seventeen staff files were reviewed.

Thirty-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

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(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for 17 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for 2 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Thirteen childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) Two staff members were employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

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) The adult to child ratios were adequate at all times. On the morning of the inspection there were 9 childcare staff caring for 52 children. The registered provider and manager were available to provide relief to the care rooms as needed.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:
ECCE Room 1 had 4 staff members with 19 children ranging in age from 3 years 8 months to 4 years 3 months, 7 children were attending on a full day care basis, 2 children were attending on a part-time basis, and 10 children were attending the sessional service.

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ECCE Room 2 had 2 staff members with 19 children ranging in age from 4 years 9 months to 5 years 1 month, 7 children were attending on a full day care basis, 3 children were attending on a part time basis, and 9 children were attending the sessional service. The manager was available to provide support to this room as needed. Tiny Buds Room had 3 staff members with 14 children ranging in age from 2 years to 3 years 3 months, 3 children were attending on a full day care basis, 5 children were attending on a part time basis, and 6 children were attending the sessional service. This room accommodates all the pre-school children attending the service on a full day care basis in the afternoons.

(8) The registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises when the service was in operation, as evidenced in the staff roster maintained in the service.

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) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basin needs:

- Children's nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Staff members were responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision provided and gentle reminders regarding hand washing.
- Mealtimes were a social occasion with lots of conversation and laughter observed between the children and adults. Staff provided children with help when needed. Younger children were supported to eat independently. Drinks were available to the children in each of the care rooms.
- In the 3 care rooms any child who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. All children who required a nap went to sleep at the designated sleep time after dinner.
- Children were observed engaging in tabletop activities, art and crafts and free play with children afforded the opportunity to choose and change activities if they so wish. The curriculum was child led with the

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themes being “Flowers” and “Different culture” with the children doing arts and crafts and planting sunflowers to reflect these themes.

- The service embraced outdoor play and learning. Children were observed enjoying outdoor play with both their peers and staff members. Staff supported children’s learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members working closely with parents to provide a child centred approach to learning. The adult’s demonstrated knowledge of the individual care needs of the children. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together. Challenging behaviour when presented was dealt with in a calm and caring manner and the children responded well to behavioural management strategies such as distraction and re-direction.
- Each child had a key worker, with the children familiar with those who were caring for them. The children sought out staff members for comfort and support when needed. The staff were observed to communicate using positive and gentle tones when interacting with the children.
- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated by the daily sharing of information at drop off and collection time and by using a software application. Photographic evidence was on display of the last Valentines Day where children could invite one person into the service to celebrate by doing art activities and making biscuits. Children were overheard talking about the fun they had.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

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Compliance Information

(1)(b) Sleep facilities in the service consisted of sleep mats placed on the floor in the Activity room off the Tiny Buds room. Within the care rooms there were couches, mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.

(3)(a) An outdoor space was located to the rear of the building, which was enclosed by walls and fencing. The surface area consisted of artificial grass, cement and soft tiles with a secure gate.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The play resources in the care rooms were accessible, organised and stored on shelving which allowed the children to select and replace materials. The care room had areas of interest which included a home and shop areas, construction area, musical play equipment, animal baskets, book in boxes, plastic/wooden building blocks, puzzles, activity boards, dolls area, art and crafts materials which included water and sand tables.
- Equipment in the outdoor spaces included a wooden playhouse with a climbing wall, ladder and slide, tyres, ride on toys, mud kitchen with play equipment, wooden hut, planting boxes and a digging area consisting of wood chip.

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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

- A 4-week menu plan was available with a variety of hot meals ranging from meat, chicken, fish and vegetarian all cooked onsite. The children brought their own healthy morning and afternoon snacks from home. The main hot meal on the day of inspection consisted of roast chicken, mash potatoes, vegetables, stuffing and gravy. Additional snacks were available for the children staying until closing time. Water or milk were the drinks of choice.

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 following safety measures were observed in the service:

- On the day of inspection both the indoor and outdoor environment appeared safe. Risk assessments were conducted on a daily basis. The registered provider, manager and staff members had a clear understanding of their role and range of responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- All bins for contaminated waste were foot pedal operated.
- The hand-washing policy was implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times. Warm water, one use only cloth hand towels and liquid soap was available in the children's sanitary facilities.

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- Fridges were available in each care room for the storage of perishable items in the children's food boxes.

Safe Sleep:

The following safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The 4 children who availed of sleep were supervised by an adult at all times.
- A sleep log was maintained on all sleeping children at 10 minutes interval recording their colour, breathing pattern and position.
- The temperature of the room used for sleep was maintained between the normal range of 18°C to 22°C.

Fire Safety:

The following Fire Safety practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- All emergency exit doors were accessible in the event of an evacuation.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The Garda vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Renewal of Garda vetting has been received for the staff member.

A log of each staff vetting date will be kept at front of each staff file. Staff vetting dates will be checked frequently to ensure no vetting has expired.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Garda vetting renewal document.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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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 service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available in each care room and safely stored in 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

- (1)(a) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill in the Tiny Buds room was on the 15/04/2026.
- (b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance record of the fire fighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms on the premises. The fighting equipment was last serviced in May 2025. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced in May and December 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for up to 92 children at any one time attending the service. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2026 to the 27/03/2027.