

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE027
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Name of Service:	Small Beginnings
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Address of Service:	Capdoo, Clane, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 HC91
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Name of Registered Provider:	Shirley O'Keeffe
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	18/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	8
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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
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

Small Beginnings is located in Clane Co Kildare. The service is operated from two adjoining rooms on the ground floor of a private residence. The service is registered to provide sessional care for children aged 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 8.45am to 11.45am and 12.15pm to 3.15pm, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The premises includes ground floor access to sanitary facilities and an outdoor area to the rear.

Staffing

The service employs five staff members including the registered provider. There were four staff members including the registered provider present on the day of 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
- Discussion with relevant staff

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

The inspection focussed on the following regulations:

- 9 (1) (a) (b) 2 (a) (b) (c) (d) 4 - Management and recruitment
- 11 (1) (2), (8)(a) - Staffing levels
- 15 – Record in relation to a preschool child
- 19 (1) (a) - Health, welfare and development of child

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23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

25 – First Aid

26 – Fire Safety

29 – Premises

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 (1).

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, 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.*

(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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and remained present for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The recruitment records for five staff were reviewed on inspection and met compliance as follows:

- (a) Nine written validated references from a past employer were available.
- (b) One written validated reference from a reputable source was available.

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- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all five 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 was available for two adults who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months.
- (4) Documentation was available to show that all adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs. There were four adults available to the eighteen children present.
- (3)
- The required adult to child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection.

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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.*

Compliance Information

(15)(a), (d), (e), (f), (g) (h)

A sample of five child record forms were reviewed. The service had the required record of parts (a), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (h).

Non-Compliance Information

- (b) There was no record of a start date on any of the records reviewed.
- (c) There was no space available for a record of a finish date on any of the records reviewed.
- (i) The records reviewed did not contain written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

This was found non-compliant on the last inspection dated 1st February 2023, the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider did not prevent the non-compliance from re-occurring.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

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(b), (c) and (i)

Record forms have been purchased from Early Childhood Ireland and all files will now have this new record form going forward. The new up to date child record forms will be used.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photo of new child record form.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the supporting document were reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 15.

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 parents and guardians of the children provided all snacks for the children which included a variety of foods including sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts. Staff used lunchtime as an opportunity to promote independence. For example, children were encouraged to retrieve and manage their own lunch boxes with support provided if required. Children were observed to use the toilet independently and any child who required assistance with toileting or hand washing was supported when needed. Children were prompted to wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Water was available for children to access at all times. Children displayed pride and a sense of responsibility when given the job of helper for the day which included handing out lunch boxes and placemats.

Verbal cues were used to signal to children that the end of an activity was approaching. This provided the children with the opportunity to prepare and transition to the next activity in an unhurried manner. Staff demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. For example, when a child became upset staff immediately reacted and dropped to the child's level and offered the child comfort and reassurance. Staff sat with children at lunch time and were observed to actively listen and engage with children's interests promoting positive social interactions.

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The indoor environment offered a variety of materials to support children's learning and development. These included items such as, a library with a selection of books supporting early literacy, small world materials such as animals and dolls supported imaginative play, a mark making area encouraged prewriting skills, a well-equipped home corner. Child size furniture was available to support children's comfort and independence. The presence of a family wall with photos provided children with a sense of identity and belonging.

All children accessed the outdoor area on the day of inspection. Staff were observed playing games and music was played encouraging the children to sing and dance which promoted gross motor development and positive interactions.

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

Appropriate measures had been taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children and staff in attendance as demonstrated below:

General Safety:

Access to the service was secure ensuring no unauthorised access to or from the building. Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children. Heavy furniture was secured and cables were out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

Warm water was available to the children along with liquid soap and paper towels. Pedal bins were available throughout the service. The service was maintained in a clean condition. Children were observed to wash their hands prior to snack time and after using the toilet.

Administration of Medication:

A detailed care plan was in place with signed parental consent for the administration of emergency medication. Medication was stored in an accessible location and staff clearly demonstrated knowledge of the services procedure to safely administer medication to a child in line with the services administration of medication policy.

Fire Safety:

All emergency exits were kept clear of obstruction and regular monthly fire drills took place.

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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)

There was evidence to show that there was an adult who held First Aid Responder training available to the children at all times.

(2)

(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and stored safely in an easily accessible and prominent position in a press in the care room and was available to the children at all times

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) Regular fire drills take place in the service. The last fire drill was documented to have taken place on the 22nd May 2026.

(b)

The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment on the premises was available. The maintenance records confirmed the most recent service was carried out on 27th August 2026.

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Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

There was no record available to demonstrate that the smoke alarms had been maintained since the last inspection.

This was found non-compliant on the last inspection dated 1st February 2023, the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider did not prevent the non-compliance from re-occurring.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

New documentation has been done up and when the fire system is being checked the smoke alarms will be checked on the same day.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of the forms

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the supporting document were reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 26.

This will be reviewed on the next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.

Compliance Information

(d)

The service was in a clean condition. There were no areas of the service that required maintenance or repair.