

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE175				
Name of Service:	Messy Hand's Pre-School				
Address of Service:	1534 Allenwood North, Allenwood, Naas, Co. Kildare				
Eircode:	W91 RWD6				
Name of Registered Provider:	Joann Talbot Mullholland				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	21/05/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>8</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	8	PM	N/A
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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

Messy Hands preschool is a sessional service located in Allenwood, Co Kildare. The service operates a sessional service, Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 12.30pm for 38 weeks of the year.

There is one care room located to the rear of the registered providers domestic dwelling.

There is an outdoor area to the front of the premises.

The service offers a play-based curriculum to the children aged between 2 to 6 years.

Staffing

The registered provider operates the service single handedly. There is a second person available to attend in the event of an emergency. The registered provider holds a qualification at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 – Staffing levels

Regulation 19 – Health, Welfare and Development of the child

Regulation 23 – Safety

Regulation 25 – First Aid

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety

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

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 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

(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

The files of the registered provider and emergency person were reviewed and met compliance as follows:

- (2)
- (a)(b) Three references from a past employer and one from a reputable source were reviewed.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for both adults and the service demonstrated compliance with the regulatory notice to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as an adult.
- (4) One adult had a qualification at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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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.

(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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children throughout the inspection.

(3) The adult to child ratios were always maintained during the inspection. One adult facilitated the programme of care and education for eight pre-school children.

(8)(c)

A second person familiar with the service was available and in close distance of the service on the day of inspection.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The registered provider and staff of the service had ensured that each child's learning, development and well-being was being facilitated as observed by the following:

Children's independence was supported throughout the morning, for example, they were encouraged to use the toilet independently, manage their own belongings and attend to personal care needs with appropriate guidance from staff. A healthy eating policy was in place and evident through the healthy lunches children brought from home, reflecting good communication with families regarding healthy choices and prohibited items.

Interactions observed throughout the inspection between staff and children were warm with staff observed supporting children in their play. Staff demonstrated strong relationships with children this was evidenced during a conversation between the registered provider and children regarding a local football club. Staff made themselves available to the children to scaffold and extend learning as well as be available should a child require assistance this was observed in the outdoor area when a child asked for help building a sandcastle. 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.

The indoor environment offered a variety of materials to support children's learning and development, and children were observed to be engaged in their play throughout the inspection. 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 fostered imaginative play and social interaction. Small groups of children were observed engaging in role play in the home corner that mirrored real life experiences. Construction materials and jigsaws, matching and sorting activities promoted problem solving and logical thinking, while art activities supported creativity. Child size furniture was available to support children's comfort and independence.

The outdoor area had a grass surface and contained play equipment such as a blackboard, a large sand pit and balls all of which provided opportunities for active and social play.

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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

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:

Thermostatically controlled 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 after using the toilet.

Administration of Medication:

A care plan was in place for a child who required emergency medication. The medication was stored in a conspicuous position and was within date.

Fire Safety:

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

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)
- There was evidence to show that an adult hold certification in First Aid Responder training, one adult was available for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)
- (a) 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.

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) A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on 4th May 2026.
- (b)
- The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. The maintenance records confirmed the most recent service for the fire fighting equipment took place on the 20th September 2025 and smoke alarms were carried out on 28th October 2025.