

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK142
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Name of Service:	Poppins's Pre-School Professionals
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Address of Service:	Old Windmill Lane, Lower Gerald Griffin St Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 HW84
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Name of Registered Provider:	Derek O'Halloran
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	18/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	82	PM	67
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	J Ryan
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

Poppins Pre-school Professionals is a full day care service located in Limerick city centre. The service provides care to pre-school children aged 0-6 years. A service for school aged children is provided each afternoon. It operates from Monday to Friday between 07.30 hrs and 18.15 hrs and includes a sessional service from 09.00 hrs to 12.00 hrs for 38 weeks of the year. The service is purpose-built and includes a front entrance lobby, a manager's office, a kitchen and 8 pre-school rooms all located on the ground floor. It also has 2 designated sleep rooms located next to the baby room and the pre wobbler room. There is a large well-resourced outdoor play area at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider owns and manages the service. A designated person in charge has been appointed to oversee the daily operations of the facility. There are at present 22 childcare staff employed at the service. All staff working with the children have an appropriate qualification in early childhood care and education. Staff engage in ongoing professional development and onsite training takes place regularly at the service.

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

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3)(4) – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - (2) - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 (1)(a) - Health, welfare and development of the child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of the child

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

Regulation 25(1)(2)(a)(b) - First aid

Regulation 26(1)(a)(b)(4) - Fire safety measures

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the baby room, pre-toddler room and wobbler room.

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, person in charge, 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was a named person in charge, and a deputy was available to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection the person in charge was present and the staff roster indicated that the person in charge or the deputy were available on the premises each day.

(2) The files of 3 staff members working in the service were reviewed. All other staff files had been reviewed at the last inspection of the service on 27/11/2024.

(a) There were 6 written and validated references submitted by staff from previous employers on file.

(b) References from sources other than past employers were not required.

(c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for the three new staff employed to work in the service.

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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 Regulation 23 in the body of the report.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no new member of staff had resided outside of jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Two of the three newly appointed staff members present on the day had appropriate childcare qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. The third staff member who worked in the kitchen had hazard analysis critical control points (Haccap) qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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.

Compliance Information

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 19 staff working across 7 care rooms with 82 preschool children present in the morning and 67 children present in the afternoon. During the period of inspection, the minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained and an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children in each care room.

1. Baby Room – There were 3 children(0-1.5yrs) and 1 staff
2. Prewobbler Room – There were 9 children (1-1.5yrs) and 2 staff
3. Preschool Room – There were 14 children(3-4yrs) and 2 staff
4. Wobbler Room - There were 10 children(2-3yrs) and 2 staff
5. Toddler Room - There were 14 children(2-3yrs) and 2 staff
6. Montessori Room Sessional- There were 15 children(3-4yrs) and 2 staff
7. Montessori Room Full Day- There were 17 children(3-4yrs) and 2 staff

Additional staff were available to allow staff to take meal breaks, for kitchen duties and office management.

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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, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a) BASIC NEEDS:

Healthy eating was promoted within the service. The food was provided by an outside catering company and prepared fresh each day for the children attending full day care and part time care. The service ensured that all children attending received a nutritious and varied diet, which took their individual needs and preferences into consideration. Children who arrived at the service early had breakfast. Dinner consisted of mince beef, mashed potatoes and vegetables. The babies were provided with foods to suit their age and stage of development. Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snack and meal without being rushed. Children sat at low tables and had their lunch in an environment that promoted social interaction with their peers and the adults and

the atmosphere was relaxed and unhurried. Drinking water was available and accessible in each room on low level shelving throughout the day if required by children.

Nappy changing took place at regular intervals and staff were observed to follow the nappy changing policy which was displayed in each nappy changing area. All toiletries required at changing times were stored within easy reach of staff close to the changing unit. All children had a change of clothes at the service if required.

Children were encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times such as after toileting and before eating. Hand washing was facilitated in the sanitary accommodation and in the rooms with a supply of hot and cold running water, hand dryer/paper towels and liquid antibacterial soap.

A separate sleep room was provided for children in the baby, and wobbler playroom with standard cots for each child. The safe sleep policy was displayed in the sleep rooms. Waterproof mattress covers were used, and room temperatures were checked before children slept. The safe sleep policy was followed with 10-minute checks documented for all sleeping children. In the wobbler sleep room staff members stayed in the room at all times while these children were sleeping. In the baby room staff were observed going into the sleep room to carry out their 10 minutes checks on the sleeping children.

Low level stackable sleep mats were used for the older children from the toddler playroom and the staff stayed with the children while they were slept.

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The group were allowed to move freely indoors from one activity to the next for specific periods of time. A designated rest/quiet area was available in all rooms should a child need to rest and have some quiet time, and children were observed to use the rest area whenever they choose to.

There was a plentiful supply of play props available to support imaginative and creative play in the defined interest areas in the kitchen/home corner, construction area, dress up area, rest area, art/craft area and jigsaw section.

Children's self-care needs were supported where they were observed to put on and take off their coats and hang them up after their use when they returned to the room. Mark making and fine motor skills were supported where children were colouring pictures. Staff moved between tables to work with individual children on a one-to-one basis. Children were observed to make choices in relation to play activities and had their choices respected.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

The children were supported and encouraged to behave appropriately for their age and stage of development through having simple rules to follow and a good level of choice of activities. The staff modelled positive behaviour for the children, and they were praised them for their good behaviour. Interactions with the children were positive and caring. Staff were observed to sit at the tables and on the floor at the child's eye level, used soft tones of voice, addressed children by their first name and supported them to complete activities they had chosen.

The key person system was observed in operation in each room of the service. Staff members engaged with their designated smaller group. This reduced the number of children in any one area at any given time. This created a quiet, calm environment allowing children to have more space and more one-to-one attention with their staff during the day.

A large notice board was in the front hallway where information was shared with parents. The weekly menu plan and details of healthy snacks and lunch ideas were displayed.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

Each care room in the service was organised with distinct interest areas to support children's learning and development. These areas included lots of clear floor spaces for the younger children in the baby room and pre wobbler room. Sensorial play materials and sound making toys were stored in accessible baskets on low-level shelving, allowing children to easily reach and interact with resources. Push and pull along toys helped children develop their sense of balance and their early walking skills. In the toddler and the playschool room fine motor

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development tools like peg boards and threading, cognitive development resources such as puzzles and construction materials were all provided for the children. Language development activities like storytelling and social conversation were included in the activities planned for each day. Children used age-appropriate tables and chairs during snack time and activities.

Open shelving units where children could access play equipment and materials independently were in place. Children were observed to choose play materials, complete an activity independently and replace the equipment to its designated place on the shelving. Seating was available in all rooms where children could rest/ relax in and have some quiet time if they choose to opt out of an activity. Good supplies of books were available which helped support language development and numeracy.

Children were observed colouring pictures and drawing which supported mark making activities. Sensorial play activities were evident as sand boxes were available outdoors with buckets, shovels and additional play props.

The walls of the rooms were decorated with posters and the children's artwork.

Facilities were available for outdoor play. Children were observed to play outdoors during the inspection and were supervised by staff at this time. A designated safe space was available in the outdoor area for the younger children. Within this area children had access to bicycles, trikes, balance bikes, cars and scooters. A sheltered area was also provided outdoors facilitating children getting outside each day regardless of weather conditions. Lots of free open space was accessible for running, climbing, using swings and slides and enjoying the freedom of play in the large play area provided. All areas outdoors were covered with rubber matting. This made the area accessible in all weather conditions, and it reduced the risk of injury to children in the outdoor play spaces.

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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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The garda vetting disclosures for 2 staff member was not dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting, published by the inspectorate in September 2023 and effective from Jan 01/01/2024.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Garda Vetting has been applied for the 2 staff members.

One Garda vetting disclosure has been returned for one of the staff and the service awaits the return of the vetting disclosure for the second staff.

The date when all staff members are due for renewal of garda vetting has been documented to ensure that all staff have completed the re-vetting process in an appropriate time frame, including staff on leave.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Up to date garda vetting disclosure document for one staff.

Summary Comment

The noncompliance has not been addressed as one of the Garda vetting has not been submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection each child attending the service was checked in and out by staff and a record of each child's attendance was maintained on a daily basis and was available and accessible at all times.

(3)(a) No persons other than the following could enter the premises without being approved by staff:

(i) A preschool child attending the service.

(ii) A person dropping or collecting a preschool child.

(iii) An employee.

(iv) unpaid worker.

(b) A daily visitors record of any other persons entering the service was in 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) Four staff members held current certification in First Aid Response (FAR) and were available at all times while the service was in operation.
- (2)(a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes safely stored and easily accessible in each room of the service.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available at all times if required for a child.

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) The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place April 2026
- (b) The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently in May 2026 and a record was maintained of the number, type, and maintenance of the firefighting equipment. The fire and smoke alarm system were tested and serviced in May 2026.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the hallway of the service.