

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS018
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	The Ferns Preschool
-------------------------	---------------------

Address of Service:	The Ferns, Main Street, Portarlinton, Co. Laois
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	R32 VW9H
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Sheila L Dunne Jnr
-------------------------------------	--------------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	15/06/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	NA
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

The Ferns Preschool is a sessional service located in the town of Portarlinton, Co Laois. The preschool operates from an adapted domestic dwelling and consists of an entrance hall, four preschool rooms, an outdoor preschool room and an office. An outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises. The service provides sessional care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years, Monday to Friday between 09:00-12:00pm. Car parking and set down is available on the public road outside the service.

Staffing

The registered provider employs six adults to work in the service. The registered provider works directly with the children and facilitated the inspection on 15 June. There were six adults present on the day of inspection; this included the registered provider, four-childcare staff and a student.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations;

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) – Management and Recruitment,
- Regulation 11 (1)(3)– Staffing Levels,

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Regulation 15 – Record of preschool child,
- Regulation 16 – Record in relation to preschool service,
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child,
- Regulation 25(1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid,
- Regulation 26(1)(a)(b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

(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)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The files for six staff members, the registered provider and one student were reviewed and the following was noted:

(a)

Four written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

Eight written validated reference were available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider, six staff members and the student. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available for one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Six employed childcare staff members and the registered provider working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

- One written validated reference from a past employer or from a source other than a previous employer in respect of one student was not available.
- One written reference from a previous employer was not validated, in regard to one staff member.
- Two written references from a source other than a previous employer, were not validated in regard to one staff member.

(3)

The procedures in respect (2)(a)(b) were not carried out by the registered provider prior to the employment of staff in the service and the commencement of a student.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Outstanding validated references received.

Prior to reopening for 26/27 school year, the registered provider will go will through staff files with staff members and ensure everything is in check.

Supporting documentation submitted

Validated references viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

(3)

The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.

There were eighteen children aged between 3-5 years being supervised directly by two adults in Year 1.

There were seventeen children aged between 4-5 years being supervised directly by two adults in Year 2.

The registered provider was available to work with both preschool groups.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

(1)
A sample of 9 records were reviewed. These records included a record in writing of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above regulation for the 9 records reviewed. The registered provider informed the inspector that the service is in the process of moving all records an electronic application.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g).
- (h)
The attendance records of children were digitally recorded at the time of children entering and leaving the service and were available for review.
- (j) One written record of medication administration was available for review in relation to one child who required specific medication. The record was signed by staff and parents and was completed appropriately

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Non-Compliance Information

- (i)
A staff roster was not available. The inspector was advised that a rolling roster is in place as staff work the same hours per week.
- (k)
A sample of accident and incidents records were not available for review.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A roster will be available, per room with staff allocation from September 2026. The roster will be placed on the notice board.

The registered provider made contact with the electronic application support team and now knows how to find the accident and incident form, and medical administration forms on the new application system. Forms and records will be accessible going forward.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken. The non compliances identified under Regulation 16 have been adequately addressed.

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

Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches consisted of a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, breadsticks and fresh fruit. Weather on the day of inspection was sunny, children from Year 2 had a picnic for snack time. Staff and children sat on picnic blankets in the outdoor play area during snack time and engaged in conversation. Children from Year 1 were observed to eat their snacks sitting at low level tables indoors. Children's drinks were readily available both inside and outside throughout the morning.

Hand washing was observed throughout the morning as children washed their hands before their snack,

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

after toileting and after outdoor play. Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary. The children in Year 1 were observed to enjoy a tabletop activity with modelling dough and 'movement time' where they engaged in singing and dancing.

Supporting relationships

Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names, appropriate eye contact was made, and soft vocal tones were used during interactions.

Children had individual wall mounted filing pockets for storing their daily artwork and creations, which is placed in their learning journals by staff and provided to parents at the end of the year.

Child friendly pictures of the day's routine were positioned at child's level on the wall. This supported the children to feel secure and independent.

Staff communicate with parents via an electronic application which provided updates regarding the day-to-day care of the children and provided service updates.

Physical and material environment

The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the session as they chose between activities. Toys and play equipment were positioned on accessible open shelving in the classrooms which nurtured independence, facilitated choice and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play. A range of books were available in the reading area of each room. Children had a choice of small world houses, kitchen corners with toy pots, foam blocks for construction and a chalkboard with chalk.

Children had access to an outdoor area throughout the day. The large outdoor play area is separated into different interest areas. A garden with natural grass is located at the end of the premises and had play equipment such as swings, footballs and bikes available to the children. An open roofed area in the garden had a large sand pit and children were observed engaged in digging, filling up buckets and making creations with sand. An enclosed roofed outdoor area was located in the garden also and had child size tables and chairs, and a mud kitchen with play equipment. A second fully enclosed outdoor classroom was located directly outside the back entrance door of the preschool. Hooks for coats and bags were located in the outdoor classroom area, as well as a full size couch for children to rest and take a break from activities during the session.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 two entrance doors to the service were adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to prevent unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised. The entrances were managed by staff and the lock to the premises was up high out of reach of children.

Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored safely on high shelves out of reach of children.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. The children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and after using the bathroom. Individual hand towels were located in a basket next to the sink and a basket was available for used cloths.

The preschool room and sanitary accommodation were well-ventilated with openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

An individual and emergency care plan was in place for one child who required specific medication in the event of a medical emergency. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to the child in the event of an emergency.

Fire Safety:

All fire exits were clear of obstruction. The fire assembly point was located to the side of the premises in the laneway.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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)

One staff member was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

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 for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 08 June 2026.

(b)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced on 04 November 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(b)

A record of annual maintenance of the fire detection system was not available in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Fire alarm system maintenance check conducted on 08 July 2026.

Agreement that an electrician will visit every June to check/update and certify equipment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of fire alarm maintenance record viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 42 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2027.