

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO057
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Name of Service:	Juniors Childcare
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Address of Service:	Spencer Manor, Spencer Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F23 HX79
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Name of Registered Provider:	Toni Hamrock
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	10/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	25
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulations Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
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

The service is in the town of Castlebar, Co Mayo in a purpose-built building. The service provides a full day care and operates between the hours of 08.30 and 18.00. A sessional care programme is available between 09.00 and 12.00, from Monday to Friday, for children aged between 2 and 6 years of age.

The premises consists of two playrooms called the Peppa Pig and the Rainbows playrooms. There were also sanitary facilities, a nappy changing area and a kitchen where food is reheated from an external supplier. The pre-school children have access to two secure outdoor play areas to the front and the side of the building.

Staffing

The service currently employs six adults, which includes the registered provider and manager. The registered provider does not work in the service and is not detailed on the staff roster.

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.

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 -

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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, manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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.*

(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

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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 registered provider was the person in charge and a manager was available to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The roster indicated that there was a designated person in charge and a deputy in charge while the pre-school children were on the premises.
- All six adult files were reviewed which included the registered provider:
- (2)
- (a) Ten of the required 12 written and validated references were from past employers.
- (b) The remaining 2 of 12 written and validated references were from sources other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six adults. The service 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 one adult working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months.
- (4) There was evidence that nine of the new adults working directly with the children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to a level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent. The remaining three adults did not require childcare qualifications as two were students and the other adult worked in the kitchen.

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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.*
- (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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the day.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to.
There were 6 adults working directly with 27 children in the morning and 6 adults working with 25 children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) Documentary evidence on the roster indicated that at least two adults were on the premises when the pre-school was operating.

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

19(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- Snacks were provided by the parents/guardians. The breakfast and the hot meal which was chicken goujons with vegetables and gravy were provided by the service. An alternative was available if a child had a different cultural or dietary requirement.

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- The children were afforded plenty of time to enjoy their snack in a relaxed and unhurried manner. Cutlery and plates were given to children during snack times and the hot meal of the day.
- The children had access to water on a low-level table which allowed them the opportunity to take a drink if thirsty. When children were playing in the outdoor area a water trolley was taken out for children to access when thirsty.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence.
- Hand washing was observed at appropriate times throughout the day, it was observed prior to snack time, after outdoor play, nappy changing and toileting.
- Each child's privacy and dignity were respected while they were either toileted independently or with some assistance as required.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in a designated rest and relaxation area in the playrooms.
- The tables and chairs in the playrooms were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- Children were observed at table top activities, playing in the clearly defined interest areas and in circle time. The children enjoyed outdoors riding tricycles, playing together, art work, messy and sensory play.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

- A key person system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The role of the key person was to liaise with parents and guardians.
- The communication with parents/guardians was via the service multimedia application with daily information on their child's experiences, routine and programme of activities. Information was also provided at collection and drop off times, via text messages and by phone calls.
- Each child had a learning journal and scrapbook identifying their work carried out for the year and their art/craft work.
- The staff were observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children. During observed interactions, the staff demonstrated that they knew the children well, recognising and valuing their individual interests, needs and learning. The staff were observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them and responded to their requests. The staff interacted

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in a positive way with the children e.g. they sat at children's level, maintained good eye contact, showed empathy and a good understanding of each child.

- Staff were observed helping children find solutions, supporting them and talking to children in a variety of ways- discussing, questioning, modelling, commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.
- The themes for the week were 'Graduation, Body Parts, 5 Senses and the World Cup', children sang the graduation songs and each child had a country picked for the world cup.
- Children were observed at free play in the special interest areas, tabletop activities, outdoor play, creative art and circle time.

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 trained in first aid responder for children was available to the children attending the pre-school service. Four adults had first aid responder with an in-date certificate.
- (2)(a) The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the kitchen.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped with all contents within expiry dates and were available while the children were attending the pre-school service.

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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 monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on the 21 May 2026.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service date 10 May 2026. The smoke and fire detection alarm system had the last annual service date on the 05 January 2026.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire on the premises.