

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO073
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Name of Service:	Little VIP's Pre-school
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Address of Service:	Breaffy Community Centre, Breaffy, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F23 PY23
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tracy Keohane
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	10
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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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).

Description of service

Little VIP's Pre-school is a private sessional service in operation since 2005. The service is registered to accommodate children aged from 2 to 6 years old. Currently, morning and afternoon sessional services are available from 09:00 to 12:00 and 12:30 to 15:30. They operate from Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated during these times.

It operates from a room in the Breaffy Community Centre which was previously the original St. John's National School in Breaffy village on the outskirts of Castlebar. There are adult and children's sanitary areas, a kitchen/storage area and the outdoor play areas are located to the rear and side of the building.

Staffing

There are five adults currently employed in the service including one adult employed under the access inclusion model (AIM), a relief staff member and the registered provider.

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

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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-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.

Additional Information

17/06/2026

An assessment of fire safety on the premises was requested in writing from the chief fire officer following the inspection. The chief fire officer determined the safety measures in place in the event of a fire were adequate and furnished the inspectorate with a letter to that effect.

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.*

(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) The registered provider was the person in charge and a second person was available to deputise, if required.
- (b) Either the person in charge, deputy or named persons were present in the service while the pre-school children were in attendance during the morning and afternoon sessions.

Recruitment files for all five adults were reviewed.

(2)

- (a) Four of the 10 required written and validated references were from past employers.
- (b) The remaining six written and validated references were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five adults demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Curricula vitae indicated that one of two international police vetting certificates was available for one adult who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months as an adult.

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- (4) Certificates were available to evidence that four of the five adults, working directly with the children, had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. The fifth adult had a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) There was no officially translated copy of an international police vetting certificate on file for one adult for whom it was required, posing a potential risk to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (d) A certified translated copy into English of the international police vetting is now on file for the staff member for whom it was required. The registered provider will ensure that all documentation requiring translation is received before any adult has access to or contact with the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (d) A copy of the certified translated copy into English of the international police vetting was received in the office of the inspectorate on 7 July 2026.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (d).

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*

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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) Observation of staff in both the morning and afternoon sessions along with the staff roster evidenced that there were an adequate number of adults available while the pre-school children were present in the service.

(3) The adult/child ratios were met.

There were 17 children, aged between 3 years and 5 years 6 months, in attendance with 3 adults in the morning and 10 children attending in the afternoon with 4 adults.

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

- In line with the service's healthy eating policy the children were observed eating nutritious food at 10:45 which had been prepared by the parents/guardians. Examples included eggs, filled sandwiches with ham, crackers, cheese, wraps, bite sized pieces of fruit and yogurt.
- Staff sat with the children in line with the service's healthy eating policy and the atmosphere was noted to be happy and relaxed. They engaged the children in social conversation and the children chatted with their friends.
- Water was easily accessible from individually labelled water bottles.
- Children were escorted to the sanitary area in the hallway by staff who were on hand to provide reminders to flush the toilets and to wash and dry hands.
- Children were observed reading in the rest/quiet area throughout the morning and carrying out activities with the adults in the care room. The area was furnished with vinyl sofas and a chair. Age and stage appropriate books were in the area, should a child wish to read while sitting quietly.
- Self-help skills were encouraged by the adults who praised each child's efforts. Examples included children observed returning their toys and equipment to storage areas at tidy up time and zipping up their coats.

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Staff were nearby to help those who required assistance. In addition, step ups were available in the sanitary area to facilitate toileting and handwashing.

- Children were dressed appropriately for the weather in the outdoor area where they were observed wearing coats, hats and one child carried their umbrella.

Supporting Relationships:

- The adults in the service were noted to have developed a strong reciprocal relationship with a past pupil and their parents. An example included a past pupil, parent and siblings being warmly welcomed into the service for a visit on the day of inspection. The child and the parent exchanged information with the adults and the children and the adults in the service were very happy to see them and spend time with them.
- Staff were observed sitting at the children's level on the floor and at tables, listening intently to their conversations and using strategies to extend their thinking and learning. These included using open ended questions, explanations and providing feedback on activities. Examples included an adult confirming that red and orange make brown when a child was mixing paint at the large easel and a second adult encouraging and praising a child who was matching words with corresponding pictures.
- All children were welcomed to participate in the various curriculum related activities provided throughout the morning. Staff were observed inviting children to participate in age and stage related activities.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by staff, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement with staff heard praising children zipping up their jackets and assisting their friends in carrying heavy boxes.
- Various methods of communication were stated as being in use to communicate and exchange information with parents/guardians. Examples observed included a messaging application which included photographs of the children, emails and phone calls. Staff were observed talking to parents at drop off in the morning.
- Staff were noted to support each other with the routines of the morning and afternoon. Meetings with management were stated as taking place with topics such as planning primary school and holiday and road safety as it was coming to the end of term.
- Sufficient time and support were provided with staff using songs and verbal prompts to prepare children to transition to the next activity.

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Physical and Material Environment:

- The care room was laid out in clearly defined areas with equipment and toys providing play and learning opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- Children's toys and equipment, which were stored in low boxes and drawers, offered ease of access, promoted choice and encouraged independence.
- Children were observed carrying out activities throughout the morning on suitable age-appropriate tables and chairs. Adult chairs were also available in the care room for the adults caring for the children.
- The secure outdoor play areas provided alternative learning environments for the children. Gross motor skills of pedalling, swinging, balance and co-ordination were observed with children accessing tractors, rockers and a wheelbarrow. Imaginary play was facilitated with the use of equipment including garage, mud kitchen and wooden houses. The covered area ensured that the children could play outdoors in all weathers.

Planning of activities:

- Observations in My Learning Journey books, linked to both national frameworks of quality and curriculum, were documented for each child which helped create a complete, well-rounded picture of each child's progress and development. These observations informed the planning for the curriculum with children's emergent curriculum documented. Topics covered included; "The Hungry Caterpillar", lady bugs, water safety and teddy bears.
- Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling which were observed during the inspection. Examples included a staff member reading stories such as "The Gruffalo" and action games outdoors including "Sleeping bunnies and the Dingle Dangle Scarecrow".
- Children had the opportunity to express their views, take the lead and exercise choice in relation to their engagement in activities and accessing play equipment throughout the morning in both the indoor and outdoor play areas.

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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

Fire safety:

- In date fire extinguishers were available at the Pre-school door to the service ensuring they are safe and ready to use in the event of an emergency.
- The fire assembly point was visible at the front of the building a safe distance from the service.

General safety:

- The external door of the service was secured when all the children entered the building ensuring the children could not leave unsupervised or that unauthorised adults could gain entry.
- The internal doors to the staffroom and the adult toilets and the boiler house in the rear outdoor area were secured to prevent children entering unsafe areas.
- Windows in the care room were above adult height and therefore were inaccessible by the children.
- All toys and play equipment indoors and outdoors appeared in good condition and were well maintained.
- Flexes and cables in the care room were placed out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents were secured in the kitchen which was secured and inaccessible by the children.
- The perimeter of the outdoor areas at the rear and the side of the building were secured with stone walls and metal gates, ensuring children could not leave the area unsupervised.

Infection control:

- Personal belongings including coats and bags were stored on photographic labelled hooks, off the floor area in the hallway.
- Handwashing was observed before the serving of food, after toileting and coming in from outdoor play.
- The wash hand basins in use by the adults and children were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, between 29.1°C and 34.2°C, dispensing soap and dispensing paper towels. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Staff were observed sanitising the tables in the morning and afternoon, before and after the serving of food and sweeping the floor to ensure the areas were kept clean and hygienic.
- Perishable food was stored in the fridge in the service, preventing the food from spoiling.

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- Room and sanitary windows were open allowing fresh air to circulate.

Administration of medication:

- No medication was observed being administered on the day.
- Temperature reducing medication was available, in its original container and stored in the kitchen out of reach of the children.

Safe sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping in the service in either the morning or the afternoon.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

- A large area of small particles of flaking paint and rust were visible on a radiator in the children's sanitary area posing a safety risk to the children in the sanitary area.

Infection control:

- No nappy changing unit was available for the children who required nappy changing. The registered provider stated that children are changed on a mat on the floor of the sanitary area, posing a risk of cross contamination.
- Three vinyl sofas in use in the rest/quiet area had foam exposed from loose stitching making them difficult to clean.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

- The radiator has been sanded and painted to ensure the safety of the children.

Infection control:

- A nappy changing unit has been ordered for staff to change children on to prevent cross contamination.
- The sofas are in the process of being repaired. Management will conduct visual checks to ensure that the soft furnishings are fit for purpose.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

- A photograph of the sanded and painted radiator was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Infection control:

- A receipt for a wall mounted nappy changing unit was received in the office of the inspectorate.
- A receipt for the fabric to cover the three vinyl sofas was received in the office of the inspectorate.

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Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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) A certificate was available to evidence that a staff member had First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed. The staff roster indicated that the staff member was available at all times, while the pre-school children were on the premises. The expiry date of the certificate was noted as 19 July 2026.
- (2)
- (a) (b) The first aid box was easily accessible to the adults at all times and available in the care room while the children were in the 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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Written records of the fire drills that had taken place in the service were furnished to the inspector. The last drill recorded was noted as 09 June 2026 with previous monthly drills recorded as 15 May and 13 April 2026.
- (b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting certificate was last serviced on 23 January 2026 and the smoke alarm certificate was last serviced on 21 January 2026.
- (2)
- (c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were available on the premises for review by the inspector.
- (4) The fire action notice was displayed along on the wall of the service.