

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO039
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Name of Service:	Little VIPs Playschool
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Address of Service:	Carnaleck, Lavagh, Ballymote, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F56 EK70
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Connolly
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Killeen
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).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Little VIPs Playschool is a community-based preschool. The pre-school service provides morning session service from 9:30 to 12:30 Monday to Friday. The service caters for a maximum of 22 children aged between two and six years of age. The building is a conversion of the old Carnaleck National School. There are two outdoor play areas one located at the front and side of the premises. There is also a grassed area to the rear of the preschool. The preschool operates out of one large room in the premises. There are two sanitary facilities located off the playroom, one is for staff use and one is for use of the children.

Staffing

There are two staff employed to work in the service. Both staff hold a minimum level 5 on the national framework of qualifications (NFQ)

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,23,26,28, and 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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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 person in charge, 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, 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*

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(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)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise on day of inspection.

The designated person in charge was present at all times during the inspection.

The named person in charge or named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.

(2) The vetting files of two staff members working in the service were reviewed and the following was deemed to meet the requirements of the regulation.

(b) There were two validated references on file for one staff member.

(b) There were three references on file for two staff members from a past employer or a source other than a past employer as appropriate.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the early years inspectorate regulatory notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting from was not required for two staff as they had not resided outside the state for a period of six consecutive months.

(4) Certification evidence of a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) minimum Level 5 qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was on file for the two staff members that required it.

Non-Compliance Information

2 (a)

There was no evidence of a validated reference for one staff member on file.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

One validated reference received for one staff member.

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Supporting documentation submitted

Validated Reference received for one staff member.

Summary Comment

Following receipt of evidence for this regulation, the requirement for this regulation 9 has been met.

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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with preschool children attending the service.

(3) The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. There were nine children attending the service, being cared for by two adults. The children in attendance ranged in ages from 3 years 4 months to 5 years 3 months.

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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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- There was a healthy eating policy in the service which encouraged parents to send in small nutritional snacks with children each day. Each child had their own individual bottle of water which was available to the children throughout the session. The snacks were stored in a fridge in the main playroom.
- The children were encouraged to be independent in their toileting needs. Staff members remain close by to provide assistance if required. The children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- Children were observed to have time to move around their environment and select different items to play with. On the morning of inspection children were seen painting, playing with toys in the home and construction
- Clothes protectors were available for messy play as seen on the morning of the inspection. Clothes protectors were also offered when the children were outside playing in the mud garden.
- Children were observed working together and friendly towards one another. Slight disagreements in relation to taking turns or sharing was dealt with appropriately by the adults and children both working together to find a solution.
- There was a small, enclosed rest area with soft furnishing for the children who wanted to rest at different intervals throughout the session.

Supporting Relationships:

- There were two staff members in the main care room. The children appeared comfortable with their staff and were familiar with them, the children were seen to seek support when required.

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- Staff were observed to spend time comforting the children as needed, for example when one child became frustrated when having to share toys, staff were seen sitting with the child and explaining the importance of sharing.
- There was evidence of staff positively interacting with children and responding to children's invitations to join and play their games.
- The children were seen supporting each other when playing together both indoor and outdoor. Some children choose to play together while others were observed engaging in more solitary activities like reading, drawing and painting.
- Parents were spoken to at drop off and collection and staff are observed to spend time with parents detailing the children's day.

Physical and Material environment:

- The care room had a variety of toys and resources. The resources were specific to encourage the development of each child, i.e. colouring pencils for fine motor development, tabletop activities of jigsaws, bricks and shape sorters allowed for cognitive development and fine motor development.
- All shelving was accessible to the children, and they were able to choose activities as required
- Tables and chairs were suitable for the use of the age of the children attending the preschool service.
- Resources available to the children in the playroom were in a good state of repair with additional resources available in storage and rotated frequently.
- The children were observed to spend a large amount of their time outdoors due to the nice weather. There were three distinctive play areas within the service. Areas of interest included, slide, ride on bikes, balancing beams, playhouse, raised flower and vegetable garden, large polytunnel and a mud kitchen.
- Children were observed to be playing in the mud kitchen making cakes cups of tea while others chose to play on ride on bikes and chasing bubbles from the bubble machine.

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

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General Safety:

- The main entrance was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- The handle on internal doors in the main building were fitted out of reach of the child, preventing unauthorised exit from the rooms.
- The outdoor area was secured with wooden fencing walls and bolted gates.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Waste was inaccessible to the children both indoors and outdoors.
- Storage facilities were kept inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- Cleaning agents are securely stored beyond the reach of children within the service.
- All toys and play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, were observed to be safe for the pre-school children using them and in a good state of repair.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation.
- The tables were cleaned prior to snack time, with foods served to children on suitable plates.
- Foot operated Pedal bins which were available in the pre-school room and sanitary area.
- Staff were observed reminding children of the importance of hand washing at different intervals throughout the day.

Administration of Medication:

- No medications were administered to children on the day of inspection. However, the person in charge demonstrated a clear understanding of safe medication management practices and procedures.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

1. There were two pest control boxes placed along the wall in the preschool and in the children's bathroom. These were accessible to the children and could pose a risk of harm to the children.

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2. Low hanging wires were accessible to the preschool children and posed a risk. It is acknowledged that when brought to the attention of person in charge to address the matter the wires were removed.

3. In the outdoor play area, it was observed that the wooden shed posed a potential hazard to children. Specifically, the wood on the shed had sharp, splintered edges, and there was a protruding nail within reach of preschool-aged children.

Infection Control:

- The painted cistern in the staff bathroom has discoloured, making it difficult to clean effectively posing a potential infection control risk.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has advised in the corrective and preventative action response that the service is closing.

Infection Control:

The registered provider has advised in the corrective and preventative action response that the service is closing.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

No supporting documentation submitted. The registered provider has advised that the service is closing.

Infection Control:

No supporting documentation submitted. The registered provider has advised that the service is closing.

Summary Comment

As there the outstanding non-compliance were not addressed this regulation remains outstanding. It is acknowledged that the service submitted a cessation of 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 firefighting 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 detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service.
- (b)
- The records inspected show that firefighting equipment was serviced in November 2024.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed on the walls of all care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

1. (a)
- Fire drills had not been carried out monthly, which was demonstrated by the most recent fire drill documentation which stated the last fire drill was completed on the 13-01-25.
- (b) The fire detection and alarm system had not been serviced annually as required, which was demonstrated by the most recent service records which stated that the last service was the 31-08- 2022

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has advised in the corrective and preventative action response that the service is closing.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted. The registered provider has advised that the service is closing.

Summary Comment

As there the outstanding non-compliance were not addressed this regulation remains outstanding. It is acknowledged that the service submitted a cessation of service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was written documentation to evidence that there was adequate insurance in place for the type of service provided and the number of children attending.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The person in charge informed the inspector that the building was sound and stable structure. There were no visible defects present externally.
- (b) The perimeter of the outdoor area consisted of walls and wooden fencing.
- (c) The windows were operable, providing natural light and ventilation.
- (e) There were sufficient toilets, and wash hand basins available to the children on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

29 (d)

- The walls in the playroom were not maintained as evidenced by chipping paint in different areas in the preschool room.
- The premises required cleaning, as evidenced by accumulations of dust and cobwebs on skirting boards and high surface areas.
- There was evidence of black mould in the playroom and sanitary area which posed potential health risks to children in attendance.
- There was a hole in the ceiling of the main playroom that required maintenance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

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Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has advised in the corrective and preventative action response that the service is closing.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted. The registered provider has advised that the service is closing.

Summary Comment

As there the outstanding non-compliance were not addressed this regulation remains outstanding. It is acknowledged that the service submitted a cessation of service.