

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH058
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Name of Service:	Bright Beginnings
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Address of Service:	Rathconnell, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N91 RRP3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Charmaine Quinn, Kelly Murtagh
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	53
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy & C.O' Connor Hughes
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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 registered as a full day care service to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years of age. The service is operated by independent providers. The Early Years' Service is located on the ground floor of a two-storey adapted domestic premises. Four pre-school rooms, a sleep room, a staff room, an office area and a kitchen are provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear and side of the premises. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available. The service is situated in a rural area on the outskirts of the town of Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Staffing

The registered providers employ nine staff members. Both registered providers, six childcare practitioners and one practitioner with a combined cook/ relief supervision role were present and working directly with children on 14 May 2026.

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.

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

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Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (2) (8)(a)

Regulation 18- Copy of Act etc

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

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play -- (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance (3)(4)

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

Regulation 26 -Fire safety measures - (1)(a)(b) (2)(3)(4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 29 – Premises

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk were identified under:

Regulation 8- Notification of change in circumstances

Regulation 21- Equipment and Materials

Regulation 22- Food & Drink

Regulation 30 – Minimum Space Requirements

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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.

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The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Additional Information

A referral was submitted to TUSLA services operating outside of registration department (SOORS) on 18 May 2026 and accepted by the SOORS department on 21 May 2026.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the registered providers, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The service was found to be operating outside of its registered capacity as an additional five children were in attendance. The service is registered with Tusla to accommodate a maximum of fifty children in the premises. Fifty-five children were present on inspection on 14 May 2026.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered providers stated in the response that they responded to communication received from Tusla SOORS department. The response was accepted by Tusla and the case was closed. (Letter included)

Summary Comment

In respect of corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet regulatory compliance.

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)

The registered providers act as the named person in charge and deputy. Both were present and available in the service.

(b)

The registered providers were present for the duration of the inspection.

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Following a review of previous inspection information, evidence available on inspection and discussion with the registered providers it was determined that two new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 31 October 2024. The two staff files were reviewed and the following was noted.

(2)(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the new staff members.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. An in date garda vetting disclosure was available for one of the registered providers and five staff members which required renewal since the last inspection on the 31 October 2024.

(d)

Police vetting was not required for one staff member as they had not lived outside the state for a period of six months or longer.

(4)

One of the new staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were not available from past employers or from sources other than a previous employer in respect of the new staff members.

(d)

The inspector could not determine if police vetting was required in respect of the second new staff member as there was no curriculum vitae available for review.

(3)

The registered providers did not ensure that the required vetting procedures in respect of references were not completed prior to the commencement of two new employees in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

The registered providers stated in the response that two written validated references are now available from sources other than a previous employer in respect of one new staff member. The second staff member left the service. The service will ensure that they follow up on new employees for references before starting in the setting.

(References included)

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(d)

The registered providers stated in the response that a curriculum vitae is now in place in respect of the staff member. (Curriculum vitae included)

(3)

The registered providers stated in the response that the required vetting procedures in respect of references are now completed. The service has developed a document for new staff members to have to hand a list of things to do before they start in the setting.

Summary Comment

In respect of corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet regulatory compliance.

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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were fifty-five children attending the service supervised directly by nine adults.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered providers ensured a copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013) of the Act and Regulations was available for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

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-

- (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

(1)(b)

The care practices implemented to support the children's daily routine met the needs of the children attending the service. Children were encouraged to be independent and to feed themselves. Staff sat with younger children and assisted them as needed during mealtimes. Children wore bibs to protect their clothes at mealtimes. Children took their time to enjoy the meal. Younger children were prepared for sleep time by staff and they slept in a quiet restful atmosphere in the sleep room. Children had their nappies changed on a regular basis and as required. Personal care needs were attended to in a caring manner. Spare clothes were available for each child if needed. Children were dressed appropriately in all-in-one weather suits when playing in the outdoor environment. Children were happy and content with their carers. Good communication was observed between staff and children as the staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, nappy changing, toileting and mealtimes. Positive praise was given to children on the completion of actions and activities. Younger children were given hugs and cuddles by staff.

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Children enjoyed the freedom of movement to the outdoor play environment and played happily in the outdoor play area supported by staff. Younger children enjoyed singing songs and various play activities in the indoor environment. Older children were actively engaged during a visit from a professional parent working as a nurse and showed great interest asking questions and using equipment provided.

Staff stated a verbal handover is given to parents at collection time. A short messaging system is used to communicate information and updates to children. The child's learning journal depicting the child's play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

A separate sleep room was provided and equipped with five cots. Low level beds were available in the service for any child over the age of two years who required rest or sleep. Soft furnishings were provided in the pre-school rooms for children to rest and relax.

(3)(a)

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Three outdoor play areas were available to the rear and side of the service. Natural grass, paving stone and mulch surface areas were in place. Concrete, metal, wire and wooden fences secured the perimeter of the outdoor areas. The areas were equipped with a variety of bikes, trikes, swings and climb/slide units as well as a crawl tunnel, a tyre swing, an elevated playhouse, a dig area and a “bus scoile” to support physical and imaginative play.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

In the sleep room one cot was not fitted with a waterproof mattress or covering.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b)

The registered providers stated in the response that a waterproof mattress cover is now in place on the cot mattress. All mattresses now have a waterproof cover so this should not be a future issue. The service will ensure if the covers need to be replaced that it will be done. (Photograph included)

Summary Comment

In respect of corrective actions taken photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet regulatory compliance.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

The chairs for children attending the wobbler room were not age and stage appropriate and suitable for the children in attendance. The chairs did not provide an appropriate fit for the children. The children could not place their feet on the floor which was necessary to provide a suitable base of support to the child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered providers stated in the response that new tables and chairs were ordered that are age and stage appropriate and adjustable. (Receipt included)

Summary Comment

In respect of corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet regulatory compliance.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

The quantity of protein provided to the children in the main meal was insufficient as it did not meet the requirements of the “Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Services”

The “chicken hot pot” for 53 children was prepared using three packets of raw chicken breast each weighing 284g. A combined total weight of 852g not taking account of the loss of water during the cooking process.

At least 1,590g of cooked poultry was required in line with the Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Services page 43 which states that 30g of cooked poultry constitutes a serving which is required for the main meal provision.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered providers stated in the response that the service has increased the amount of chicken that goes into the chicken hot pot. The service will ensure that all food meets the requirements of the “nutrition standards for early learning and care services”. (Photograph included)

Summary Comment

In respect of corrective actions taken to date photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet regulatory compliance. The practices as stated will be reviewed on the next inspection.