

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016MH011
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Name of Service:	Tigers Childcare
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Address of Service:	Rath Lodge, Ashbourne, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A84 W983
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Name of Registered Provider:	Therese Noonan
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	13/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	48.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Nexus Building Block, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
Inspection undertaken by:	E.Saini and N.McEndoo
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

Tigers Childcare is a private childcare service which is part of a chain located in a residential area of Ashbourne. The building is a purpose-built single storey facility and consists of 5 care rooms, office, kitchen and sanitary facilities. The service provides full day care, sessional and part-time care to children from 1 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). Hours of operation are from 07:30am to 6:30 pm. The rooms in the service were as follows:

Junior Discoverers (1to 2 years).

Senior Discoverers (1 to 2 years).

Explorers (2 to 3 years).

Active Cubs 1 (3 to 4 years).

Active Cubs 2 (3 to 5 years).

An outdoor space is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 17 staff to include the designated person in charge, a quality manager, a chef, a cleaner and 13 childcare staff. The registered provider and the quality manager facilitated the inspection.

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 not announced and focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child. The scope of the inspection included the four care rooms.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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)(c) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required throughout the inspection.

(b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived at the service at 9:50am and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2) Following discussion with management and review of files it was determined nine staff had been employed since the previous inspection on 03/06/2025 along with the garda vetting of three staff members that had previously indicated out of date.

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- (a) Ten validated written references were available from a past employer.
- (b) Seven validated written references were available from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for twelve adults employed in the service since the last inspection in June 2026. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Documentation was available to demonstrate that eight adults working directly with children in the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained as the table below demonstrates.

Room Name	Age profile	On day of inspection
Junior Discovers	1-2 years	2 adults with 10 children in the morning and in the afternoon.
Senior Discoverers	1-2 years	1 adult and the agency staff member with 8 children in the morning and 9 in the afternoon.
Explorers	2-3 years	3 adults with 10 children in the morning and in the afternoon.

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Active Cubs 1	3-4 years	1 adults with 11 children in the morning and in the afternoon.
Active Cubs 2	3-5 years	2 adults with 15 children in the morning and 2 adults with 8 children in the afternoon.
Total	1-6 years	10 adults with 54 children in the morning and 10 adults with 48 children in the afternoon.

(8)(a) On review of the service roster it was observed that two adults were on the premises during the operation of the service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

Basic Care Needs

- There was a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere throughout the care rooms in the service. Children were observed to be comfortable in exploring their environments, familiar with routine and secure in their relationships with staff members. Staff members were responsive to children's needs and requests, demonstrated familiarity with children by recalling their preferences and provided comfort and encouragement to children regularly throughout the day while also meeting their basic needs.
- Planned activities in the care rooms inspected were observed to be child led which promoted each child's independence and preference to undertake activities at their pace and interest.

Supporting relationships around children

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- In all the care rooms the staff members were observed to be warm and kind to the children in their care. The children were very familiar with the educators and sought them out for support and guidance as they required it.
- Engagement and communication with parents are via an electronic application which is updated regularly to reflect each child's sleep, food intake, nappy changes, accidents/ incidents and developmental achievements.
- The service engaged positively with the local community through social activities involving children and staff. The inspector observed evidence of a visit from the local fire station, which included a fire truck and firefighters from the local station. Follow-up activities and craft work related to the visit were also completed.

Physical and Material environment

- The play materials and equipment were positioned at an accessible level for the children on open shelving which nurtured independence and facilitated choice.
- An enclosed outdoor area was located to the rear of the service. The main section of the outdoor play area was surfaced with soft matting. The children's gross motor play was supported through the provision of a climbing frame with a slide as well as a climbing frame was available for the children to use. A range of ride on toys were also available. There was also a sheltered play area along the side of the garden which was covered with soft matting where children had access to a home corner, large transport cars, and large plastic building blocks.
- Suitable rest areas were available in the rooms to enable a child to rest and take a break from activities throughout the day. They consisted of soft mats, cushions and a library.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. The basic needs of children in the Discoverers room were not observed to be met on the day of inspection;
 - Children who could sit independently were observed strapped into low level chairs for prolonged periods outside of times for eating. Children who are confined in equipment for longer than 15 minutes have their need for freedom and mobility restricted impacting on their physical and emotional development
 - Children did not get outdoors during the afternoon. After the prolonged period of sitting, children were advised they were going outdoors for some play. The weather had not been considered, upon

transitioning outdoors it began to rain. Children who had stepped outside were promptly ushered back inside the room and became audibly upset. Wet gear was available to the children. The children required an opportunity to play outdoors to ensure their physical and emotional needs were met.

Physical and material environment

2. In the Active Cubs 1 room areas of interest were poorly developed with little supporting equipment and materials to enhance the themed areas and to ensure meaningful sustained play. For example.
 - The play kitchen was empty with materials.
 - Dress up area had no dress up items available to the children.
 - Shelves were minimally stocked.
3. The physical and material environment in the Discoverers room was insufficient to provide an adequate learning environment for the number of children present, for example:
 - There was limited opportunity for open-ended play due to a lack of materials, equipment and interest areas in the room, for example five library books were present for ten children, a wooden kitchen had limited supply of materials, one shelf was present with limited construction materials such as blocks present.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider confirmed that staff meeting was held where the following topics were discussed and reviewed: Environments, Transitions Policy, Curriculum Policy, and Interactions & Pedagogy Policy, and Outdoor Policy.

1. Following a risk assessment, straps have been removed from all chairs in Junior discoverers room. Management will ensure and regularly review that outdoor play is facilitated in all weathers as per their policy.
2. Following the inspection additional play resources and materials were purchased. Management will oversee monthly room audits that will now take place, as well as an environment review annually, to identify any additional resources or materials required.
3. The quality support team have provided re-training on Curriculum and Transitions policies. This training is documented and reviewed. Management will oversee monthly room audits that will now take place.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of the minutes and sign off from both staff meeting and training.

Photographic evidence.

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Copy of new audit forms.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been accepted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 19 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The outdoor play areas were secured with railings to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of the children.
- During transitions, adults were observed to repeat headcounts and checks of children to ensure all were present when moving from indoors to outdoors and vice versa.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, single use hand towels and thermostatically controlled warm water were available at all wash hand basins used by the children.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in care rooms.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- There were fire drill procedures displayed in the hallway of the service.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Outing:

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- No outings took place in the service during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The inspector noted a wooden slab located on the shed porch in the outdoor area was broken and uneven, creating a raised edge and unstable surface. The inspector observed children playing in the area, the damaged slab presented a potential trip and fall hazards to children.
- Rubber grip handles from a children's metal trike were not present, posing a risk of harm to children.
- An outdoor heat pump was accessible to children due to the lock on the door and wooden fence surrounding it being left open.

Infection Control:

- Children in the Senior Discoverers room did not have their hands washed before eating snack. This is at variance with the service policy on infection control.

Fire Safety:

- At sleep time in the Senior Discoverers room, a floor bed with a sleeping child was observed blocking the designated fire exit in the room. Designated fire exits should be clear of any obstructions during the operation of an early years' service to ensure the safe evacuation of staff and children in the event of an emergency.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspector observed that a child who had been placed in the cot room was not physically checked from 14.50 to 15.40pm, despite the sleep monitoring record indicating checks had occurred every 10 minutes throughout the sleep period. This constituted a failure to ensure adequate supervision arrangements and compromised the reliability of safeguarding records maintained in the service.
- The sleep room located outside of the Discoverers room required ambient lighting to be able to monitor sleeping children safely and easily. Sleeping areas should not be fully darkened for day-time naps.
- A sleep plan was not available for a child in Senior Discoveries who was observed to be under 2 years of age and sleeping on a sleep mat.
- The inspector observed that a child requiring sleep was placed on a sleep mat rather than being provided with age-appropriate sleep equipment. The use of a sleep mat for this child was not in accordance with Tusla's Guidance for the Early Learning and Care Sector on Sleep.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider confirmed that staff meetings were held; the following topics were discussed and reviewed: Risk management policy, Hand washing policy and procedures, Safe sleep guidance and policy, including sleep plans and the Sleep and Rest Policy. Items identified on inspection have been added to the daily safety checklist to prevent reoccurrence.

General Safety:

1. The wooden slab on the shed has been replaced. A safety audit of the building was overseen by management to ensure the maintenance logs are up to date. Management will continue to oversee the maintenance log.
2. The bike handles were replaced. Additional rubber handles have been purchased to ensure prompt replacement to prevent reoccurrence.
3. A combination lock has been added to the outdoor heat pump unit to ensure it remains inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

4. Handwashing signage reviewed to ensure correct handwashing and supervision of same takes place. Management will ensure and regularly review policy with staff.

Fire Safety:

5. A floor plan for the cocoon beds and sleep mats has been completed. The floor plan is displayed on the wall of the room for reference.

Safe Sleep:

6. To prevent reoccurrence, a weekly roster has been implemented for ten-minute sleep checks. Timers are present and signage has been put in place also. Support and supervision meetings were held to discuss safe sleep procedures. Management will oversee weekly audits of sleep checks.
7. Dimmable lighting has been installed in the cot room to allow soft lighting where children sleep.
8. A sleep plan has been revised and implemented. Management will oversee an audit of current sleep plans and regularly review to prevent reoccurrence.
9. Management have retrained on 'Sleep and Rest Policy' and sleep provisions for children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Evidence of reviewed policy sign offs submitted.

Copy of audits and updated checklists submitted.

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Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been accepted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was in place for up to 75 children to attend the service on a full day basis, valid until 27 March 2027.