

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017MH075
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Name of Service:	Karen's Little Stars Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Unit 7, The Mauldins, Duleek, Co. Meath
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Name of Registered Provider:	Karen Coyne
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	59	PM	45
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	D.Murray & AM. Cunningham
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

Karen's Little Stars Childcare Ltd was established in 2017. The service provides full day, part time and sessional care and education to children from birth to 6 years. The service operates from 7.00am to 6.00pm.

and eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme from 09:30am to 12:30pm. A school aged service is also provided.

The premises is located in a converted apartment building and consists of 4 care rooms, an office, kitchen, sensory room and sanitary facilities.

The rooms were as follows:

Room 1 provides care and education for children from 3 to 4 years.

Room 2 provides care for children from 2 to 3 years.

Room 3 provides care for children from 2 years 8 months to 6 years. This room was used to accommodate school aged children in the afternoon.

Room 4 provides care and education for children from 2 years 8 months to 6 years.

A well-equipped outdoor space was located on the premises along with sheltered break out areas off the care rooms.

Staffing

The registered provider employed a manager, 15 childcare staff, 1 school aged staff member, a student who also works with the school aged children and a cook. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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

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- 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.

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 manager, 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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Nineteen staff files along with 1 student files were reviewed.

Forty validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

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- (c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 20 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available for 4 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) All childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) Two staff members were employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

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) During the period of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. There were 12 adults caring for 59 children. The manager was available to provide support to the care rooms as needed.
- (2) The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:
- The rooms were as follows:
- Room 1** had 2 adults with 12 children ranging in age from 3 to 4 years all attending on a full day care basis.
 - Room 2** had 4 adults and 1 student with 13 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years all attending on a full day care basis.

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- **Room 3** had 2 adults with 14 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 6 years, 3 children were attending on a sessional basis while 11 children were attending on a part-time basis.
- **Room 4** had 4 adults with 20 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 6 years all attending on a full day care basis.

(8) (a) According to the staff roster the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic Needs of the Infants and Children:

- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions observed. The older children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- The service embraces outdoor play and learning with all children observed enjoying meaningful, sustained play with their peers.
- The staff members sat and chatted with the children at mealtimes, helping the children when required whilst encouraging and supporting language development.
- All children were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest at the service's designated sleep time after dinner.
- There were a variety themes for the month in the different care room such as "Active Week", "Summer" and "Farm Animals" with lots of outdoor activities and art and crafts displayed to reflect these themes. Each child had a Learning Scrapbook which recorded observations and photographs of activities which demonstrated the child's developmental progress throughout the year in the service.

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- The staff worked well together as a team. Children sought out staff members who readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members were observed to be very caring, kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences.
- The staff members worked closely with parents to provide a child centred approach to learning. The adult's demonstrated knowledge of the individual care needs of the children. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together. Children were comforted and cuddled when they became upset with the staff adopting behavioural management strategies such as speaking to the child softly and promoting turn taking and sharing. Challenging behaviour when presented was dealt with in a calm and caring manner and the children responded well to distraction and re-direction.
- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated by the daily sharing of information at drop off and collection which was supported by electronic means.

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-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day,
- (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.

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Compliance Information

(1)(b) Cosy areas consisting of mats and soft furnishings were available in each care room for children to take a break from activities if needed. Stackable beds were placed on the floor in Room 2 for children over 2 years who required sleep.

(3)(a) The outdoor space was enclosed and had a secure gate. The surface area consisted of artificial grass along with a low impact surface. Sheltered areas permitted outdoor play in all types of weather. Additional sheltered break out areas were available off Room 1 and 2 with a long-enclosed corridor with play equipment leading to Rooms 3 and 4.

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.

Compliance Information

- The play resources in the care rooms were accessible, organised and stored on shelving which allowed the children to select and replace materials. The care room had areas of interest which included home areas, construction area, musical play equipment, sensory trays, activity boards, farm equipment, book rack beside cosy area, plastic/wooden building blocks, puzzles, dolls area, art and crafts materials, tuff trays with sand and play materials and equipment. Tables and chairs in each room were appropriate to the age and stage of development of pre-school children attending the specific care rooms.
- Equipment in the outdoor space included climbing frames, rockers, ride on toys, slides, tuff trays, plastic benches for outdoor activity, mud kitchen, construction area with a sand and gravel pit, wooden activity unit with climbing wall and slide, saucer swing, wigwam and wooden tree blocks nicely decorated for seating.

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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.

Compliance Information

The service had a menu plan with a variety of meals ranging from meat, fish and poultry along with snacks prepared onsite by the resident cook. The children attending the service on an ECCE basis brought their own lunches. Children attending the service on a full day care basis availed of breakfast from 07:30am to 9am consisting of a choice of cereals, toast and fruit. A snack was served at 10am which consisted of an assortment of fruit. The main meal was served between 11:30am and 12:30pm which consisted of beef stew, mash potatoes and vegetables. A light snack of beans and toast was served at 14:30pm with additional snacks available for the children staying late. Water was the drink of choice which was available in all the care rooms.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The main door to the service was secured by a buzzer system and the outdoor space was enclosed by fencing with secure gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and the outdoor spaces.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified. All play equipment seen on the day of inspection was suitable for the age, stage and development of the children in each care room.
- An indoor and outdoor risk assessment was conducted on a daily basis.

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Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- All bins for contaminated waste were foot pedal operated.
- The hand-washing policy was implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times. Warm water, hand paper towel and liquid soap was available in the children's sanitary facilities.
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable items in the children's food boxes.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of Room 2 which was used for sleep was maintained between 18 to 22^o C while children were sleeping.
- A sleep log was available to record the position, colour and breathing pattern on all sleeping children at 10 minutes intervals.
- Children sleeping on sleep beds were supervised at all times.

Fire Safety:

The following Fire Safety practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- All emergency exit doors were accessible in the event of an evacuation.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

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.

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Compliance Information

(1) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 2nd June 2026.

(b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment on the premises. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 21st May 2026. The firefighting equipment was last serviced in October 2026.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 90 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2026 to the 28/03/2027.