

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018KE511
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Name of Service:	Enquiring Minds Childcare
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Address of Service:	Downings North, Prosperous, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 D540
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Name of Registered Provider:	Clare Venter
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	27/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	57	PM	46
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Suite 7, Floor 2, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co Kildare, W91 E6H2
Inspection undertaken by:	F Carty and R Brien
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Enquiring Minds is a privately owned childcare facility and one of three services operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to accommodate children aged 0 to 6 years. An option of sessional, part time and full day care is available. Sessions over a 38-week annual period, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service is open from 7.00am to 6.30pm.

The service is located in Prosperous, Co Kildare and operates from a purpose-built facility. The service comprises of seven care rooms, two designated sleep rooms and an outdoor area to the rear of the building.

On the day of inspection six rooms were open to preschool children. Little Einsteins for children aged 2- 3 years, Little Professors for children aged over 3 years, Mighty Minds for children aged 3 - 5 years, Baby Room for children aged 0 – 1 year, Wobbler Room for children aged 1 – 2 years and Toddler room for children aged 2 years.

Staffing

The service employs a total of 31 staff including a manager, deputy, administrator, cook, maintenance worker, a cleaner, 21 preschool staff and four school age childcare staff. There were 17 adults present on the day of inspection including the deputy manager, 13 childcare staff, a cook, a cleaner and a maintenance person. The area manager and registered provider arrived subsequent to the inspector's arrival.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, information and records, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 -Management and Recruitment,

Regulation 11 - Staffing Levels,

Regulation 16 - Record in relation to pre-school service,

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child,

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 16 - Record in relation to pre-school service and regulation 19 (1) as a result the scope of the inspection focussed on the Baby, Wobbler, Toddler and Little Einstein 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 registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Statutory Notices		
Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN1761	27/04/2026	No translated international Police Vetting available for two staff members.
Status	Action was taken by the registered provider immediately following service of the notice and the provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the Inspectorate.	
Immediate Action Notice IAN1763	27/04/2026	A Garda vetting disclosure obtained by the service was not available for one staff member.
Status	Action was taken by the registered provider immediately following service of the notice and the provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the Inspectorate.	

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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*
- (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)(b)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

The inspection focused on the recruitment records for 12 adults employed since the last inspection on 2nd December 2024 and the operations manager. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults who were present and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Of the 26 validated, written references that were required, 23 were available from a past employer and three were available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the thirteen adults. The service also adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Translated international Police vetting was available for five adults who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as an adult.

(3)

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had been carried out prior to the 12 staff members commencing employment in the service.

(4)

Records were available evidencing that ten staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(c) See Statutory Notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN1763 served.

(d)

See Statutory Notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN1761 served.

(4)

There was no evidence that two adults who were working directly with the children had the required qualification or equivalent deemed by the Minister.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4)

The staff member has received her DCDE confirmation that her degree is recognised to work in setting, the second person is not employed as cover and newly appointed staff will be made aware not to leave the room without checking who is their cover.

Staff are informed via the daily plan post on the app every morning by 9am who is the covering staff member and any additional cover if required. Branch managers and deputy managers are then cover if there are more than three absences.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

Letter submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the supporting evidence were reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the Regulatory requirements.

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services were adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 57 children attending the service being supervised by 14 adults on the day of inspection.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(h) Details of the attendance of each child were recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service in written form.

(i)
The staff roster was available on the day of inspection and reflected the adults working in the service.

(k)
A sample size of ten accident and incident forms were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
(j)
A sample of eight medication administration records were reviewed. These records were not completed appropriately, there were no medication details, dosage, frequency or route completed on the form which could impact the continuity of care of the child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Staff complete the form both online and paper in full, staff are retrained on the completion the form.

Management trained on thoroughly checking the form weekly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Form submitted.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the supporting evidence were reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the Regulatory requirements.

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

(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)(a)(b)

The service had a healthy eating policy in place and meals were prepared and cooked onsite. Children attending on a sessional basis bring in a morning snack from home. Meals were provided at regular intervals. Dinner was served from 1:30pm. Younger children were given bibs for dinnertime. Drinking water was available to children throughout the inspection and children were given a drink with their meal. The inspectors observed children feeding themselves independently, with staff remaining close by to provide support if required. During the meal, the staff engaged in conversation with the children, supporting the development of their communication and social skills. Older children were provided with the opportunity to be helpers at mealtimes by handing out water to their peers.

Nappy changing was carried out on a schedule, and staff acted promptly when children required changing outside of the scheduled times. Staff were observed to use this time for warm one to one interaction with the children, supporting their sense of security. Children were provided with opportunities to develop their self-care skills, for example, tidying up following play, using the toilet independently, and washing their hands routinely. Transitions to and from sleep were calm, with staff using soft tones to provide comfort and reassurance to children. Babies slept according to their individual routines, and children attending the Toddler room slept at a designated time. Staff reported that children could sleep outside of these times if required. Rest areas with soft matting and cushions were available in all care rooms, allowing children to take a break from activities if required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Staff were affectionate and respectful in their interactions with the children. They used the children's names, provided praise and encouragement, and dropped to their level when engaging in conversations. Toys and equipment were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving, which facilitated choice and free play. These included home areas, libraries, construction materials, small world, puzzles, mark-making materials and Montessori equipment, which was available to older children. Child size tables and chairs were available to allow children to comfortably sit during mealtimes and while engaging in tabletop activities. The outdoor area provided an alternative environment for children to interact and play. The area was split into a number of different interest areas including one specifically designated for younger children which was accessed directly from the care room.

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 entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Cleaning agents and medicines were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing.
- Individual bed linen was provided for children and was stored separately when not in use. Staff stated that bed linen is laundered weekly or as required.
- All cot mattresses in use had waterproof covers.
- Soothers were stored in individual containers.

Administration of Medication:

- There was a documented care plan available for one child attending the service who required emergency medication. Staff working in the room with the child were aware of the treatment plan and demonstrated knowledge of the procedures to follow if the medication was required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Staff demonstrated, through discussion, that they were familiar with the procedures and practices in place for the administration of medication in line with the services policy on medication administration.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were physically monitored while sleeping and sleep checks were documented every ten minutes. Discussion with staff demonstrated that staff were familiar with safe sleep guidelines.
- An adult remained in the room at all times where children were sleeping on low beds.
- The sleep room temperatures were maintained within the required temperature ranges.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits were clear of obstruction.
- Regular fire drills took place in the service, staff stated that they occur monthly.

Outing:

- The children in the Little Einsteins room participated in a trip to a playground on the day of inspection. The service demonstrated compliance with their outings policy. They had signed parental consent, a risk assessment completed and qualified first aid staff present on the trip.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Wobbler room there was an unsecured shelving unit which posed a risk of injury to a child should it fall.
2. In the Wobbler room a carpeted floor covering on a ramp posed a risk of a trip hazard to the children as it was not fully secured to the floor.

Infection Control:

3. The following infection control practices observed on inspection posed a risk of cross contamination as follows:
 - The adult or child's hands were not washed following nappy changing in the Baby room.
 - Adequate handwashing did not take place in the Wobbler or Baby room before dinner, their hands were not washed with soap and water, a facecloth was used instead.
 - Staff were observed wiping children's noses, however, they did not wash their own hands following this procedure.
 - Children were observed mouthing toys in the Baby and Wobbler rooms. Although there was a box available for the removal of mouthing toys there was no toys in there.
 - The blue roll available to staff was not stored in a dispenser.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

4. Staff stated that a child received a bottle of infant formula during the day. This bottle had not been pre-prepared by the parents or stored in the fridge. The water and formula were stored separately in a cupboard. This poses a risk of gastrointestinal illness to the child due to the storage of the formula.
5. A couch and the ball pool in the Wobbler room was torn and worn and cannot be cleaned effectively.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Shelving unit: checked by the maintenance staff, tightened. It has been added to the weekly safety check list.
2. Carpet corner was repaired. It has been added to the weekly safety check list.

Infection Control:

3.
 - Staff retrained on nappy changing policy - Face washing: please see attached retraining records, photograph evidence.
 - Staff have been informed that the facecloths, although clean, put into warm water with soap and then each used individually is not sufficient. We have purchased a high climbing chair so that children can climb to the sink to access running water.
 - Staff received refresher training on the active management of mouthing toys. Checks have been completed. New supervisor checklist put into place.
 - Blue roll: stored in the press.
4.

Formula is premade by families with the exception of one, as noted at the inspection, the formula was reflux formula that cannot be premade as it becomes too thickened. The water is stored in the fridge and removed then to get to room temperature before the formula is added. The need of the child is put first, but still follow the safe preparation procedure. The staff will continue to ensure the water is stored in the fridge and as little rest time out of the fridge as possible and follow manufacturers instruction for preparation.
5. Covers for the couches were purchased and replaced. There is additional material as we have been able to source it, this means it will repaired quicker when needed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photo of shelf
2. Photo of flooring.

Infection Control:

3. Individual retraining check sheet, policy used and step by step instructions. Policies attached for the 4 points noted.
4. Checklist attached.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with written evidence submitted by the registered provider have been reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 23.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 26th March 2026.

(b)

The number, type and maintenance record of the smoke alarms and fire-fighting equipment on the premises was available. The fire alarms were serviced on 24th September 2025. The fire-fighting equipment was last serviced on the 24th September 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c)The room temperatures recorded in the Toddler and Little Einstein rooms were not within the required temperature ranges. The temperature recorded in the Little Einstein room was recorded as 24.6°C at 12.50pm and 24.7°C in the Toddler room at 11.45am.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Additional air conditioning units have been purchased for the periods where there is a sudden increase in temperature.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photos of air conditioning units have been submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions together with the photographic evidence have been reviewed by the inspector and are deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 29.