

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018MO502
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Name of Service:	Little Bears Preschool
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Address of Service:	Murrisk National School, Murrisk, Newport, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F28 KD50
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Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Vaughan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla– Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway
Inspection undertaken by:	F Kelly.
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).

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Description of service

Little Bears Preschool is a privately owned and operated full day care service which also offers a sessional and a part-time service. It is registered to operate from 8:00 -16:30 hours and to cater for children aged from 2 to 6 years of age. Little Bears Preschool is located in a prefabricated building on the grounds of a primary school in Murrisk, County Mayo. There was one playroom, a kitchen and sanitary facilities provided. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area to the side of the building

Staffing

There were five staff working in the service including the registered provider.

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.

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

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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 wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.*

(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.

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(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 provider was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the deputy person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived and the registered provider arrived on the premises at 11.05 am and facilitated the inspection. Following a review of the service files and discussion with the service manager, it was confirmed that there were five staff members working in the service, which included the registered provider, deputy person in charge and three childcare workers. These files were reviewed on the day of inspection.
- (2) (a) Of the 10 references required, 5 references were sourced from past employers and were validated.
- (b) Of the 10 references required, 1 reference was sourced from a reputable source.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for five staff. The service 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) A police vetting disclosure was available for two adults working in the service that had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over six months.
- (4) All adults working directly with children have obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education from Level 5 to a Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework or had a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- 1(a)(b) There were not the required two validated references from a past employer or a reputable source on file for two staff members.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were not carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following in their reply

Corrective and Preventive Action

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The required references were not accessible on the day of inspection but are now printed and stored in the staff file.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the references were submitted to the early year's inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and the evidence submitted. The non compliances identified under regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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 were adequate numbers of adults working with the pre-school children attending the service.

(3) At 10:00 am on the day of inspection, the following playroom was in operation.

Playroom 1- there were 3 adults working with 18 preschool children.

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of inspection on review of the daily staff roster, it indicated that there were not the required two adults on the premises at all times during the operation hours of the services. The roster for the week of the 22/06/26, indicated that there was only 1 staff member on the premises, between 08:00 and 08:30 each day. The

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children attendance records indicated there were 2 children signed in to the service each day between 08:15 and 08:30.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following in their reply:

Corrective and Preventive Action

We will ensure to have two members of staff are on the premises at all times during the operational hours of the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of a week's roster was submitted to the early year's inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and the evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 11 has been adequately addressed.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

- Children were independent with their toileting needs. However, on occasion children needed a reminder from staff. Children were observed using the sanitary facilities throughout the session and staff were observed accompanying the children but allowed the children privacy to use it on their own. A staff member asked a child if they needed help but they said they were ok. The staff member closed the sanitary area door and waited outside the door until they were ready to return outside to continue playing in the outdoor play area.
- Children were observed washing their hands prior to lunchtime and after using the toilet. The children used the low-level sink that was conveniently located in the sanitary areas adjacent to the playroom. The

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children used warm water, liquid soap and used paper towels to dry their hands, which was disposed of in a foot pedalled waste bin.

- Snack time was observed to be a social event; the children ate their snacks in the low-level tables and chairs. The staff sat with the children, speaking and interacting in a positive manner with the children.
- Children got the opportunity to move freely around the indoor play area during the period of the inspection. The children spent the majority of the session in the outdoor play area. They were in the outdoor area when the inspector arrived at the service and only came in to the indoors for a short period of time
- The staff were observed to use positive approaches and praise when speaking to the children. The children listened to a story read to them by a staff member. The children asked questions in relation to the story and the staff member answered all questions with great enthusiasm. This circle time activity occurred in the outdoor play area, where each child sat in a circle formation on small cushions.

OUTDOOR PLAY AREA

- The outdoor play area had a fenced area where the children were observed happily playing during the session. The area also had a range of toys and equipment that can be used in the outdoor area.
- There was a tarmacadam area that the children used for range of ride on toys that was available to them. The children also had an area where they sowed flower bulbs, fruit brushes and trees.
- There was a sheltered area that the children used for a range of activities, such imaginative and role playing. On the day of inspection, the group of children were observed playing in the outdoor area for a long period of time.
- There was also a climbing frame where the children could safely climb and explore, a staff member was observed supervising this space and helped when required.

INDOOR PLAY AREA

- The play area was divided into defined areas offering different experiences for the children. The playrooms were bright and well laid out with a variety of distinct interest areas. Wall spaces were effectively used to display photographs of the children and their families, art works and posters relating to the current curricular plan.
- All the play and educational resources were accessible to children on open shelving at their height. The children were observed on various occasions taking toys and puzzles off the shelves playing with them and

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before playing with a different toy or puzzle they returned the first item to where they got it without any prompts or direction from the staff members.

- The indoor area was temporarily converted into a performance area as the older children were graduating from preschool a few days after the inspection. The children had prepared songs, dances and activity to perform on the day. The children had all made individually decorated graduation hats for the occasion, where each child's interests and likes were evident.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a person trained in first aid was immediately available to the preschool children attending the service. There were three adults trained in First Aid Responder available to the children and two staff members were trained in Basic First Aid.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available to the children, the contents were checked on a regular basis by a staff member.

(b) The first aid box was conveniently located in the playroom of the service.

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.

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(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) Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 21/05/2026.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system were available. The most recent smoke alarm system maintenance service took place on the 31/10/2025 and firefighting equipment maintenance service took place on the May 2025.
- (4) Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed throughout the service.