

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022LS001
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	The Hive at Maples Early Years
-------------------------	--------------------------------

Address of Service:	Unit 4, Kea Lew Business Park, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	R32 WODT
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Maria Croke
-------------------------------------	-------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	03/06/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	N/A
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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).

Description of service

The Hive at Maples Early Years is a private sessional service for children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The Early Years' Service is located in an industrial estate in the town of Portlaoise, County Laois. The service operates between the hours of 09:30 and 12:30, Monday to Friday, participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service includes an entrance hall, a pre-school room, a toddler room, a kitchen, office and two rooms accommodating school aged children after school. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available to the front of the property.

Staffing

The registered provider employs five adults in the service. On 03 June 2026 five adults were working directly with children, including four childcare staff and the registered provider. The registered provider works directly with the children and 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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, 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:

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) – Management and recruitment,

Regulation 11 (1)(2) – Staffing levels,

Regulation 15(1) – Record of a preschool child,

Regulation 16(1) – Record in relation to preschool service,

Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,

Regulation 20(1)(a)(b),(4) – Facilities for rest and play,

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,

Regulation 25(1),(2)(a)(b)– First aid

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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, 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.

(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)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Six staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted:

(a)

Eleven written validated references were available from a previous employer and

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(b)

One written validated reference was available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six staff. In regard to the six staff members, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available for two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Six employed childcare staff members working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be the equivalent.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

(3)

The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.

There were twenty-one children aged between 3-5 years being supervised directly by two adults in ECCE 1.

There were fourteen children aged between 2-3 years being supervised directly by three adults in the Toddler room.

The registered provider was available to provide support in the rooms when required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)

A sample of 15 records were reviewed. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above regulation for all the records reviewed.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f).
- (h)
The attendance of children in the Toddler and ECCE rooms were recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service.
- (i)
The staff roster was available and reflected the adults working in the service.
- (j)
The inspector was informed that medication is not routinely given to children attending the service. Blank administration of medication forms were available in the event that a child required medication to be administered.
- (k)
Accidents and incidents were recorded on an electronic application on tablets in each preschool room. These records were signed by two staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) Basic Needs

Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches consisted of a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, rice cakes and fruit. Staff sat with the children during snack times and engaged in conversation. Children's drink bottles were readily available in the preschool room. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversation with each other. Children were not rushed while eating. Regular hand washing was observed as children washed their hands before meals, after toileting and as needed. Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary. Nappy changing was observed to be timely, and a positive experiences for the children. Staff interacted with the children and engaged in conversation during the nappy changes.

Supporting relationships

Staff caring for the children were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children's names and photographs were positioned above their hooks in the hallway for coats and bags. A 'who is in today' chart was wall mounted with individual photographs of each child. This supported the children to feel secure and independent. Family walls were displayed in the preschool rooms, helping the children feel connected to home.

Communication with parents is facilitated during drop off and collection times. Children's day to day activities and learning is recorded in individual books which are sent home with the children at the end of each year. Children's observations are shared monthly with parent via email.

Physical and material environment

The pre-school rooms had a range of play-based materials and equipment that offered opportunity for stimulation, exploration, and imaginative play. These were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity. Children in the ECCE room were observed dressed up in costumes for dress up day and were dancing together to music played by staff.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Materials and equipment included paper and colouring equipment, modelling dough, wooden puzzles, jigsaws, books, vehicles and connector blocks. Rice was available in a tuff tray in both rooms where children enjoyed a sensory activity with containers and shovels. Equipment to promote fine and gross motor development such as stickle bricks and blocks were available to the children.

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.*

*(4) Where **outdoor** space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The ECCE and toddler room were spacious for the children to move about and play during their time spent in the service. Suitable play equipment was provided which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and sensory materials in each room. The Toddler room had a selection of musical instruments, train tracks, blocks and puzzles accessible on open shelving. The ECCE room had two dress up rails with a variety of costumes, a small world house with play furniture and a play kitchen with equipment.

(b)

Suitable comfortable rest areas were available in the Toddler and ECCE room should a child wish to take a break from activities for some quiet time, rest or read a book. Low level soft colourful vinyl mats, child size couches, chairs and rugs were placed in cosy corners in each room and provided an area for rest and relaxation. A low level bed was available for any child who required a rest during the session.

(4)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

An enclosed outdoor play area was provided to the side of the premises. Shelter was provided in the outdoor play area with a plastic corrugated roof covering part of the outdoor space. Fake grass covered the ground surface. A large concrete wall and tall gate surrounded the play area. A wooden climbing frame with a slide and swings, a play kitchen and balance bikes were available to the children. A soft shock resistant surface covered the ground underneath the climbing frame and swings. A mud kitchen, low level climbing dome, basketball hoop and digging equipment were available to the children. Outdoor overalls and wellington boots were available for the children to wear during inclement weather.

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 secure and managed by the staff. A doorbell alerted staff to any visitors and an internal latch, and lock were positioned up high out of reach of children. A newly installed fence and gate positioned at the entrance door provides added security preventing the children gaining direct access to the public carpark at the front of the service.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were well maintained and in good working order.

Cleaning products were stored safely on high shelves out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

Liquid hand soap and warm water were available for hand washing, both in the preschool rooms and the sanitary accommodation. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from wall mounted dispensers. Pedal bins were available in each care room for the hygienic disposal of waste.

The pre-school rooms were visually clean.

Refrigerators were observed in each pre-school room for the storage of perishable foods in lunch boxes.

Children's lunch boxes were stored in the fridge.

Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation. The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

A container for mounted toys was available in the Toddler room for sterilisation.

Administration of Medication:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Medication was not required to be administered to any child on the day of inspection. The registered provider informed the inspector that no child in the service was on specific medication requiring a care plan.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection. A fire assembly point was located to the front of the premises.

Outing:

A policy was in place to support outings conducted by the service. The registered provider advised that the children from the ECCE room participate in outings to a pet farm. Parental consent forms were completed prior to outings. A documented risk assessment was available in respect of a recent outing conducted in the service.

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)

Three staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.