

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024LH002			
Name of Service:	Cuddles Creche P&S Ltd			
Address of Service:	Tallanstown, Co. Louth			
Eircode:	A91 D825			
Name of Registered Provider:	Pamela Kelly, Sophie Kimmins			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	11/05/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	17
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84			
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna & 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

Cuddles Creche P&S Ltd is a privately owned service that has been in operation since October 2024. The service provides full-day care, part-time and sessional care and education to pre-school children aged from 0 to 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 8.00 am to 5.45 pm Monday to Thursday and from 8.00 am to 5.30 pm on Fridays. The setting caters for a maximum of 34 preschool children. The service operates from a 2-storey attached building situated in the small village of Tallanstown in Co. Louth. There is street parking for drop off and collection. The premises include 2 care rooms, which are located on the ground floor: the Preschool room, which has 2 sections and a 2nd large playroom, named the Toddler Room, which is subdivided into areas. Ancillary accommodation consists of sanitary and nappy changing facilities, a kitchen area and a second storey which is used as an office and storage area. There is an outdoor play area to the rear of the building.

Staffing

The 2 registered providers and 5 childcare staff are currently employed to work directly with the preschool children.

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.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 16 Record in relation to Pre-school Service, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 20 Facilities for rest and play, Regulation 22 Food and drink, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 29 Premises and Regulation 32 Complaints.

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 providers, service manager, 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*
- (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) The service had a designated person in charge, who is the registered provider, and a named person to deputise in their absence, who is the service manager.
- (b) Following discussion with the registered provider and service manager, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, the designated person in charge or the named person in charge was on the premises.
- (c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff team.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on the inspection

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and through discussion with the registered provider and service manager onsite, it was determined that 1 new staff member had been employed since the last inspection. The references on file for 6 staff were compliant upon the service's last inspection; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection.

(a) (b) Of the 1 new staff file reviewed, the following was available;

Two written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

(c) Garda vetting for 6 staff reviewed upon the last inspection met regulatory compliance; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. A Garda vetting disclosure had been obtained for the 1 new staff member. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) Employment records of 6 staff employed were reviewed at the services' last inspection, and regulatory compliance was achieved; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection.

A review of the employment history for the 1 newly employed staff member demonstrated that they had not lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months; therefore, police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence reviewed at the last inspection for 6 childcare staff, and upon this inspection for 1 childcare staff, confirmed that the staff employed to work directly with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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,

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Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:

- Two adults cared for 7 children aged 1 year 10 months to 2 years 10 months in the Toddler room, all of whom attended on a part-time or full-day care basis.
- Two adults cared for 17 children aged 2 years 8 months to 5 years 3 months in the Preschool room, 5 of whom attended on a sessional basis, and 12 who attended on a part-time or full-day care basis.

In addition to the above, the service manager prepared the dinner and covered in the care rooms for staff lunches. One of the registered providers arrived on site after the inspection had commenced and covered in the care rooms when needed.

(8) A review of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times while the service was in operation.

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:

(g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the information as prescribed under Regulation 16 (g).

(g) The following policies were reviewed and had annual reviews carried out by management dated March 2026.

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- Safe Sleep Policy
- Complaints Policy

The Health & Safety policy was also reviewed, which is due for renewal every 2 years, with the most recent renewal dated March 2025.

(3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to inspection by the inspector.

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

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being were facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

Children were observed to enjoy their snacks and meals in a relaxed manner. The staff were observed to sit with the children, using this time to engage in conversations. Older children were observed to use the toilet independently, and staff supported children where needed. Younger children undergoing potty training were provided with gentle reminders from staff to visit the toilet. Sleep was facilitated in the Toddler room after dinner, and children who chose not to sleep could play in areas within the care room and also went outdoors with staff. A change of environment was experienced by all children, through playing outdoors on several occasions during the inspection. The children were dressed appropriately for the weather on the day.

Supporting Relationships

The staff were observed to communicate using soft, gentle tones while interacting with the children. The children appeared familiar with those who cared for them and called to staff for help, for example, to feed them the rest of their dinner or to build with blocks. The staff used gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings and encouraged turn-taking and sharing of toys and equipment. The staff were observed to treat each child with respect. Discussions between staff and children demonstrate staff awareness of the children's home life. Communication with parents/carers is through in-person at arrival and collection, and

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through the use of a digital application. The staff team were observed to work well together, which ensured the transitions for the children were smooth.

Physical And Material Environment

The care rooms were laid out to include designated interest areas. Areas available included home areas, sensory play with playdough, digging in ice with frozen oranges and digger play with cereals. Dolls and play materials, dress-up role-play items, and play kitchens with play materials were available. Construction areas, musical toys to include a guitar, rest areas and books, connecting toys, creative areas, and small world toys were also provided. Small wooden climbing units placed on mats were a popular play area for the children in the Toddler room. Materials were available and accessible to children on low-level shelves and boxes at children's level, nurturing independence to retrieve and self-care to return. The children's artwork, which was linked to the curriculum planning, was displayed on the room walls, alongside birthday charts and family photos. The outdoor area had a ground surface of artificial grass. Ride-on toys, a sand tray and connecting toys were provided in this area. In the afternoon, a sensory table with fidget toys was taken outside for the Toddlers to play with.

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, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1) (b)

There were adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day.

A section of the Toddler room was set up for sleep after dinner, and had 1 cot, 3 floor beds and 3 stackable beds. Additional floor and stackable beds were also available.

Bed linen is provided by the service and laundered twice weekly or more often if required.

During sleep time, the room temperature was recorded at 19.3°C, which is within the recommended sleep room temperature of 18 - 22°C for children aged over 1 year.

The children were physically monitored while sleeping. Records were maintained and completed every 10 mins for each child detailing their skin colour, breathing pattern and sleep position.

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In both care rooms, there were soft sofas and cushions where children could sit and relax or take a break from an activity.

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 provides all food served to children except where an agreement with parents is in place. A copy of a 3-week rolling menu was available, which detailed the snacks and meals served to the children. The hot meals are purchased from an external caterer and cooked/heated daily on site by the service manager. The hot meals listed on the menu, while taking into consideration the age of children, provide a suitable, nutritious and varied choice for children. The children enjoyed a morning snack of rice cakes, brioche and yogurts served at approximately 10 am. The hot meal of meatballs, broccoli and mash was served at 12 midday. An afternoon snack of ham and cheese sandwiches was due to be served between 2.30 pm and 3 pm.

The children's drink bottles were available and accessible in the care rooms throughout the day.

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 observed on the day of inspection:

A visitor log was maintained, and the inspectors were requested to sign in and out. The children were adequately supervised during the inspection. Play materials were maintained in good order. Risk assessments were available and completed up to date. Floor coverings in the care rooms and sanitary areas were maintained in good condition. Storage areas were inaccessible to the children. Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children. Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

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Infection Control:

The inspectors observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

Warm thermostatically controlled running water, liquid soap, paper towels and foot-operated bins were provided at each wash hand basin. Children were observed to wash their hands after using the toilet and having their nappy changed, and when they returned from outside before having their dinner. Nappy changing practises were carried out in line with the services policy. Children's soothers were stored individually, and staff advised that they are washed with warm soapy water and sterilised at the end of each day. A mouthed toy box is in place in the Toddler room, where toys are removed from play and washed at the end of each day. Cleaning schedules were available and in place, and the premises was maintained in a clean condition.

Administration of Medication:

Children who required prescription medication had care plans in place, and staff were familiar with them.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Electrical cords from a Wi-Fi router on a shelf were unsecured in the Toddler room. The cord was trailing down from the shelf towards the floor, posing a risk of injury to a child.
2. An area of the artificial grass in the outdoor area was separated, with a piece of extra material coming loose, which poses a trip hazard to a child.

Administration of Medication:

3. A total of eight medication records were reviewed in the Toddler room. One record for an antibiotic had no signatures for staff, a witness or a parent following the administration of medication to the child. A second record for a cough medicine had no witness or parent's signature following administration of the medication. This does not ensure that parents are provided with up-to-date daily information on the administration of medication to their child on a daily basis. It is acknowledged that prior parental consent had been obtained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Electrical cords have been secured higher on the wall using cable clips to ensure they remain out of children's reach. Although the risk is assessed daily, the charging cord has also been relocated to the kitchen as an additional control measure to minimise access by children. To prevent non-compliances from recurring, all electrical wires have been permanently secured to the wall, and the charging station has been relocated to the kitchen to ensure it remains out of children's reach. To prevent non-compliances from recurring, all electrical

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wires have been permanently secured to the wall, and the charging station has been relocated to the kitchen to ensure it remains out of children's reach.

2. Following the inspection, a quotation was obtained to remove the artificial grass in the garden and replace it with child-friendly black rubber surfacing to provide a safer outdoor play environment. Additional supervision has been implemented in the outdoor area, with particular attention given to areas where the artificial grass is lifting, until it is removed and replaced with a new surface. Grass that has lifted has also been pinned back down for the time being to further eliminate this risk.

Administration of Medication:

3. Two medicine administration forms that had not been signed were reviewed and have now been completed with the required signatures. Management has reinforced the importance of ensuring that medicine administration forms are signed daily by parents/guardians. Ongoing monitoring will be carried out to ensure compliance with this.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographs of cords secured.
2. Photograph of grass pinned down in line with the interim measure until the surface is replaced.

Administration of Medication:

3. Copies of completed medication records.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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 registered provider ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff members held in-date FAR training.
- (2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises in each care room and were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

- (b) The service was adequately secured to prevent children exiting unsupervised and unauthorised persons gaining entry. The garden area was secured by walls, high-level fencing and a secured gate.
- (c) The service was adequately lit, heated and ventilated. The lighting was provided by a mixture of natural light leading from openable windows, which was supplemented with fluorescent ceiling lights, which were fitted with protective covers. The care rooms were maintained within the recommended temperatures of 18-22°C. The sanitary facilities were ventilated by means of mechanical ventilation, and the care rooms were ventilated by openable windows.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) The sanitary area located off the Toddler room contained a staff toilet and a child toilet, both of which, when flushed, remained full of water for periods of up to 2 hours before returning to normal water levels, indicating a partial blockage.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Following correspondence with Uisce Eireann, we were informed that a burst pipe on the main road may have caused blockages within the local water system, which could be contributing to the issue experienced on the

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premises. As this appears to be a recurring problem, the matter has been raised with the landlord. The landlord has arranged for a plumber to attend the property (outside of working hours) and carry out a full flush of the system to help resolve the issue and reduce the likelihood of future occurrences.

The situation will continue to be monitored, and any further concerns will be reported promptly to the landlord and the relevant utility provider. We will continue our daily risk assessments regarding this issue also.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of email from plumber stating the waste line was rodded to clear a blockage and restore proper flow through the drainage system. Following completion of the works, the system was tested and found to be operating correctly.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 29. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The complaints policy detailed the procedure for making a complaint, how complaints would be dealt with, recorded and how a complainant would be kept informed of the complaints procedure, with specified timelines for responses.

(2)(a)(b)

The inspector was able to review the complaints folder, including a recent complaint. There were details of the correspondence with the complainant, and these responses were in line with the service's policy.

(3)(a)(b)

The record available for review included details of the complaint and was open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.