

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC037		
Name of Service:	Ballyellis Childcare T/A Quality Childcare		
Address of Service:	Valley Walk, College Wood, Mallow, Co Cork		
Eircode:	P51 YK72		
Name of Registered Provider:	Sandra Relihan		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	03/03/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	54	PM 49
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y		
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue & D Prendergast		
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).			
Conditions if applicable	N/A		

Description of service

Ballyellis Childcare T/A Quality Childcare offers early years care and education to children on a full-time, part-time and sessional basis. While registered to accommodate children from 0 to 6 years of age, the service is currently catering for children aged 12 months to 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 7.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Thursday and from 7.00am to 4.30pm on Fridays. A breakfast club is available in the morning from 7.00am until 9.00am and the afterschool club is open from 1.00pm to 6.00pm. The outdoor play areas are located at the back of the service and are accessible from the ground floor care rooms. There are five care rooms in total in the service, one of which included school age care in the afternoon.

The service is located in a residential housing estate on the outskirts of the urban area of Mallow town in Co Cork. There is an office, professional kitchen, staff room, adult and children's toilets, two nappy changing rooms and three dedicated sleep rooms.

Staffing

There are 27 adults in employment at the setting, with 24 of these staff members working directly with the early years children. This includes two adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme. The registered provider, cook and cleaner are not involved in the direct care of the children. Two students were also undertaking work placements at the service.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 16, 19, 22, 23 and 25; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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 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, 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) There was a designated person in charge attached to the childcare facility, along with a deputy, who could deputise in her absence.
 - (b) The person in charge facilitated the duration of the inspection. Examination of the staff roster confirmed that either the person in charge or the deputy was available during the hours of operation.
 - (c) A management structure was established. The names, roles and photographs of each staff member were clearly displayed in the entrance area of the building.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge, it was determined that four adults had commenced working at the setting since the previous inspection on 3 July 2025. Two students were also undertaking educational work placement programmes. A total of six files were reviewed.
- (a) Of the 12 required written and validated references, 9 had been obtained from past employers.
 - (b) Three of the required references on file were from sources other than past employers and had been validated.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all of the staff who worked at the setting, along with the two students. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was deemed to be required for two of the adults and was maintained on file.

(4) Three of the new staff members had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, to a minimum of level 5, on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The fourth adult who did not have the required qualification had a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). A qualification was also on file in respect of a staff member who was previously based in the school age service.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The service's policy on recruitment was reviewed and met the necessary 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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(2) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

- In the Baby room in the morning there were two staff working with six children, aged between 1 year and 1 year and 6 months, all attending full day care. In the afternoon, there were two staff working with five children, aged between 1 year and 1 year and 6 months.
- In the Toddler room in the morning there were 4 staff working with 12 children, aged between 1 year and 7 months and 2 years and 8 months, all attending full day care. In the afternoon, there were 4 staff working with 14 children, aged between 1 year and 7 months and 2 years and 8 months.
- In the Montessori 1 room in the morning there were 2 staff working with 13 children, aged between 2 years and 7 months and 3 years, 12 of these children were attending full day care and 1 child was attending sessional care. In the afternoon, there were 2 staff working with 14 children, aged between 3 years and 5 years.
- In the Montessori 2 room in the morning there were two staff working with six children, aged between 3 years and 3 years and 6 months, three of these children were attending full day care and three children were attending sessional care. In the afternoon, there were 2 staff working with 11 children, aged between 3 years and 5 years.
- In the Montessori 3 room in the morning there were 3 staff working with 17 children, aged between 3 years and 4 years and 6 months, 13 of these children were attending full day care and 4 children were attending sessional care. In the afternoon, these children were split between Montessori 1 and Montessori 2 rooms.

(8)

(a) Review of the staff roster and observation on the day demonstrated that the service was consistently operated with at least two adults present.

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:

- (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

- (1)
- (i) A review of 13 administration of medication records across all rooms were conducted. Nine of the 13 records were fully completed and remained on file.
 - (k) A review of 24 accident and incident records across all rooms was conducted. All 24 records were fully completed and remained on file.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (j) The name of a witness to the administration of medication was omitted on four of the records reviewed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The person in charge stated that staff have been reminded that a witness signature is required on an administration of medication record. All staff have been made aware of the importance of this.

Supporting documentation submitted

The person in charge's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector reviewed the actions and evidence submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate. The noncompliance under Regulation 16(j) has been rectified.

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

Basic needs:

- Staff supported children with toileting. Staff encouraged independence and provided support as required. Staff members stated that nappy changing was carried out at designated intervals and as needed.
- The adults were observed to demonstrate sensitivity towards children during care routines, such as nappy changing and when settling the children to sleep.
- Children had access to soft tissues to clean their noses themselves. Staff were observed cleaning children's noses regularly throughout the day. The younger children were supported to clean their faces and hands, after they had finished eating.
- Aprons were worn by children during messy play activities and feeding bibs were provided at mealtimes.
- Mealtimes were noted to be relaxed and unhurried, with sufficient time allocated. Staff provided support to children that needed help when eating and children were encouraged to be self-sufficient. Suitable crockery and cutlery were also in use.
- Drink bottles of water were brought in from home, children had access to these bottles at all times. A staff member in the Baby room advised that the children's sippy cups were offered to them at various intervals throughout the day.
- A designated sleep room, furnished with eight standard cots, was accessible from the Baby room. During discussion, a staff member outlined that the children generally followed routine nap times and confirmed that children would also be accommodated to sleep outside of these times, should they show signs of tiredness.

Physical environment:

- A variety of children's artwork was displayed throughout the setting, which promoted identity and belonging. In addition, care rooms walls included birthday displays and family photographs.

- The children were observed to freely move around the care rooms and outdoor areas. All children had access to the outdoor areas throughout the inspection.
- Children were encouraged to engage in a wide range of gross motor skills including jumping, running and bouncing.
- Child sized tables and chairs were in plentiful supply within the care rooms.
- Fine motor skills were encouraged through puzzles, Montessori materials, colouring and sorting activities.
- The care rooms were broken into clearly identified areas including construction, role-play, kitchen, and creative corners.
- The Baby room was suitably equipped to accommodate the children’s developmental needs and to promote exploratory play. For example, there were:
 - cushioned floor mats, to support crawling babies.
 - a range of soft toys, handheld vehicles and play kitchen units, which encouraged imaginary play.
 - ride on toys and a vinyl tunnel, which facilitated gross motor development.
 - sensory toys and a low-level basketball hoop with balls, which supported fine motor skills.
- A rest/quiet area was available in each room consisting of rubber mats, pillows and cushions if children required it.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had an onsite chef who freshly prepared all meals in the service. Breakfast, morning snack, dinner and an evening snack were available. The menu catered for all food allergies and dietary requirements. The meals observed on the day of inspection were adequate and nutritious. Meals were served at appropriate times throughout the day, and snacks were available as needed. Children could ask for what they wanted in their meals. Breakfast included cereals, smoothies and toast. Snacks included fruit and crackers. Dinners included potato, vegetables and various meats with a choice of rice or pasta. Evening snacks included sandwiches and wraps. A hot lunch of bacon and cabbage with potatoes, was served on the day of the inspection.

Staff advised that some of the children had dietary requirements and food allergies/intolerances. This information was displayed in the relevant care rooms and was managed through adapting the meals that were provided for children at the service.

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 internal and external doors of the service were secured and prevented children from exiting the premises and unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- Toys and equipment assessed appeared in good condition and was well maintained.
- Blind cords were securely out of reach of children.
- The openable windows were out of reach of children.
- The safe storage of cleaning agents was ensured.
- A low-level cupboard in the Baby room was fitted with a restrictive opening device, to prevent children from accessing potentially harmful items.
- The water at the children's wash hand basins was thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C.

Infection control:

- Windows were open which allowed for fresh air circulation.
- Perishable food was observed in the refrigerators.
- Water temperatures were recorded in the sanitary facility between 32.2°C to 40.8°C.
- Wash hand basins were supplied with warm running water, liquid soap and disposable paper towelling. The children were observed to wash their hands before eating and after having their nappies changed.
- The children's nappies, wipes and barrier creams were appropriately labelled and stored in the nappy changing areas.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities.
- Wall hook storage was in use for the children's coats and bags.
- Foot operated bins were available in each room and sanitary facility.
- Cot mattresses were fitted with waterproof mattress protectors.

Administration of medication:

- The medication observed in the service was clearly labelled and in their original containers.
- Health care plans were available for each child who required them. Care plans were completed by the service and signed by both parents/guardians and staff.
- All medication was stored in the room, out of reach of children.
- All medications were in date and staff explained they were confident in administering the medication.

Safe sleep:

- Staff in the Toddler room were observed conducting 10-minute sleep checks throughout the day. These checks included position of the child, breathing pattern of the child and colour of the child. Staff members in the Baby room maintained sleep records on a digital application.
- Staff maintained constant supervision of children over 2 years sleeping on stackable beds and floor beds in the Toddler room.
- The Toddler sleep room temperature was recorded at 19.5°C at 12.19pm where eight children aged 12 months and over were sleeping in cots.
- While occupied by sleeping children aged over 12 months, the air temperature of the Baby room sleep room fell within the required range of 18°C to 22°C; a temperature reading of 18.7°C was noted.

Fire safety:

- Fire equipment was available which included fire extinguishers.
- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and clearly identified.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

It was observed that children did not wash their hands after returning inside from outdoor play in the Toddler room. Not ensuring children's hands are washed after outdoor play posed a risk of infection to the children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

The person in charge ensured that staff have been reminded of the handwashing policy and the importance of the infection control policy and handwashing after outdoor play. The person in charge sent a policy reminder to all staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

The person in charge sent a copy of the infection control policy to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector reviewed the actions and evidence submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate. The noncompliance under Regulation 23 has been rectified.

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 staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) were at all times immediately available to the children. Evidence demonstrated that five of the adults held current FAR certificates and that at least one of these adults was rostered to work at the service during the hours of operation.

(2) The first aid box was assessed on day of inspection and was fully stocked.

(a) The first aid box was stored up high, out of reach of children and easily accessible to staff.

(b) The first aid box was accessible to staff in the event that a child may require it.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The following were observed as needing repair on day of inspection.

1. Approximately five ceiling tiles in the Toddler room were cracked and broken. Two ceiling tiles in the children's sanitary adjacent to the Toddler room were stained. One ceiling tile in the Toddler nappy changing room was observed as cracked and broken. These posed a safety risk to children and staff using these rooms.
2. One of the toilets in the Montessori 3 sanitary facility was not maintained in proper working order and required repair. The toilet cubicle door was secured from the interior and an out of order sign was displayed. During subsequent discussion, a staff member advised that the flush mechanism on the toilet was not working, and this was later confirmed when tested by the person in charge.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The person in charge ordered new ceiling tiles to replace the cracked and broken ceiling tiles. The ceiling tiles will be checked regularly going forward to avoid cracks and staining.
2. The person in charge organised for the plumber to come to the service to repair the flush mechanism on one of the toilets. The person in charge stated that all plumbing works will be reviewed regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of the new ceiling tiles were forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. Photographic evidence of the repaired toilet was sent to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector reviewed the actions and evidence submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate. The noncompliance under Regulation 29(d) have been rectified.