

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC044
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Name of Service:	Baltimore Community Playgroup Service CLG
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Address of Service:	Fr. Cashman Hall, Baltimore, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P81 VC53
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Sheehy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	09/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	M. O' Reilly
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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Baltimore Community Playgroup Service CLG is an established early years service, registered to accommodate a maximum of 22 children aged from 2 to 6 years. At time of inspection the sessional service was catering for children from 2 years 6 months to 6 years including the children partaking in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. Daily opening hours are from 09:30 to 13:00 hours each day Monday to Friday. The service operates from a community hall in the village of Baltimore, Co Cork. Facilities include a large playroom, adequate adult and children's sanitary accommodation. The outdoor play area is beside the premise.

Staffing

There were 5 adults associated with the service, this included the named registered provider who is not service based. The 4 staff who worked directly with the early years children all hold a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 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 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 named person in charge and a deputy available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The person in charge and the deputy were present on the premises on day of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service.
- (2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for 5 adults, this included the named registered provider who is not serviced based. The following records were available:
- (a) Of the required 10 references, 6 references were from previous employers with records of validation on file.
 - (b) The remaining 4 references were from another source other than a previous employer with the required validation on file.
 - (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the 5 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting records were available on file for the 2 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4)
- There was evidence that the 4 staff members who worked directly with the children had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications, or a qualification deemed to be 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)
The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in the playroom on day of the inspection.
- (3)
During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children.
There were 13 children present in the morning sessional service with 3 adults in attendance.
The adult child ratio was correct.

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) to (i)

A sample of 12 of the children's registration forms were reviewed and all were found to contain all of the elements of information as required by Regulation 15 (1) (a) to (i) inclusive.

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;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)

(h) A written record of the attendance of each child on a daily basis that included the arrival and departure time from the service was recorded and maintained in the service.

(i) A written record of the attendance of each staff member on a daily basis that included the arrival and departure time from the service was recorded and maintained in the service.

(k) There was a hard copy Accident and Incident record book in the service. The Accident and Incident template included once signed, a duplicate copy of each accident and incident record for the parent /guardian.

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

- The children were observed enjoying the mid-morning snack that was observed to be a social occasion, as the children chatted freely in a relaxed environment. A system was in place whereby the children collected their own lunch boxes and water bottles and sat at a large and smaller table which had been set with plates, cutlery and place mats. A recycling container was placed in the centre of the table so that the children could dispose of waste. One staff member sat at each table and offered appropriate assistance for example assisting with the opening of cartons as required.
- The children changed their shoes to indoor soft shoes and stored them in individual cubby space to encourage independence. Each child had their own coat hook and cubby space for bags and personal belongings.
- The staff members were observed to be kind, patient and caring to each child. Staff were observed to interact in a caring manner with the children building their confidence and communication skills within the setting. Staff helped children to recognise and understand sharing and working together as a group as seen on day of inspection when children were involved in various activities through the session. In a large group activity, where each child was given the opportunity to inform the group what they did for the weekend. The children were observed waiting their turn and sharing the experience. The activities fostered the children's confidence in language development through listening, speech.
- During observed tabletop activities, the children were supported and encouraged by the staff, who acknowledged their efforts and achievements.

Physical and Material Environment

- The spacious playroom was airy and bright with openable windows to allow for natural ventilation and light. It was clean, bright and the wooden flooring in place had been recently sanded and varnished which allowed for easy cleaning.

- The room was laid out in a manner to encourage a wide range of opportunities for play experiences, such as the dress up area, well equipped playhouse, construction, art and crafts, trucks and cars.
- The spacious care room afforded children the ability to move freely, as they participated in various activities, such as colouring and drawing, imaginary play, book reading and tabletop activities. The generous clear floor space allowed the children to enjoy free play, socialise and investigate their environment in a supervised manner.
- The playroom had open shelving units to display the play materials and equipment in an accessible way to the children.
- The playroom was furnished in one corner with low couches, matting and a selection of books for the children to read. Displayed books were to hand so that literacy was encouraged whilst the children relaxed or opted out of scheduled activities if they so wished.
- The room was furnished with sufficient child sized tables and chairs for the number of children in attendance.
- The children were observed to be appropriately playing outdoors on day of inspection The outdoor play area was located beside the premise. There was an all-weather surface that had a slide, swings, see saw and playhouse The hard surface area allowed the children to practice gross motor skills on the numerous ride on toys. There was a sensory garden with planting areas located in tractor tyres. The tyres and picnic bench were colourfully painted. There was different surfaces in this area from wood to gravel stone, patio slabs and tarmacadam. There was also a decking area outside the patio door that had a separate raised covered water and sand units with accompanying play equipment for sensory and imaginative play.

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 promoted healthy eating. The children’s parents and guardians provided all food items. Healthy, nutritious lunches were observed being eaten at the mid-morning snack such as protein sandwiches, rolls and wraps, yogurts, dips and a selection of chopped fruit and diced vegetables.
- The children had easy access to their own drinking water bottle throughout the session as the bottles were located on a low shelf at child height in the playroom.

- Perishable food items were observed stored in the service fridge.

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 service has their own entrance door which was maintained secure when not in use during the inspection process.
- There were no observed cleaning agents accessible to the children.
- The first aid box was appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- Water temperatures at the wash hand basins were thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C. Recorded water temperatures in the wash hand basins in the children's toilets were 29°C on day of inspection.
- Openable windows were not accessible to the children in the playroom and children's toilet area.

Infection Control:

- Independent toileting, hand washing and discard of paper towels after the children drying their hands was observed and encouraged prior to eating and after toileting.
- Suitable handwashing facilities was available in the toilets. Warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were in place. There were three children's toilets and one designated staff toilet.
- Supervised handwashing and hand drying by the children was observed before mid-morning snack and after toileting.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be sanitised before and after snack time.

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 there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certification on file indicated that two staff members held current up to date training.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises

(b) The fully equipped first aid box was available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 02 March 2026.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on the 01 September 2025.

(4)
The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

- The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for a maximum of 22 children until 27/03/2026. The records detailed the category of service covered which was sessional care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.