

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CC056 |
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| Name of Service: | Beginnings Creche |
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| Address of Service: | Mahon Drive, Mahon, Cork, Co Cork |
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| Eircode: | T12 Y180 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Margaret McKee |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 16/03/2026 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 12 | PM | 12 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440 |
| Inspection undertaken by: | D Prendergast |
| Title: | Early Years Inspector |

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

Beginnings Creche is a full day care service, which is registered to cater for children aged 0 to 6 years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm. The setting is open between 8.30am and 4.00pm each Monday to Thursday, and from 8.30am to 3.00pm on Fridays.

The early years service operates from the ground floor of a family resource centre, located in a suburban area of Cork city. There are three operational care rooms; the Baby room, the Toddler room and the Preschool. The Preschool room was not in operation at the time of inspection. Each of the care rooms has either adjoining or adjacent sanitary facilities. The setting also includes a sleep room, a kitchen/dining room, an office and a storeroom. A designated outdoor play environment is available beside the building.

Staffing

Twelve adults are currently attached to the service, 10 of whom are employed to work directly with the children. The registered provider is not based at the childcare facility. There is one adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme and a student was undertaking a work placement at the setting.

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
- (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 assigned to the childcare facility, along with a named person who could deputise, as required. This information was visible in the entrance area.
 - (b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained for the duration of the inspection. The staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or the deputy was consistently available throughout the hours of operation.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the 11 adults attached to the service were reviewed, along with those of a student. The following information was obtained:
- (a) There were 18 references and validations from past employers.

- (b) There was evidence that six references had been provided by sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 12 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.
 - (d) Police vetting was required, available and translated where applicable, for two staff members who worked at the service and had access to children.
- (4) There was evidence that eight adults who worked directly with the children had attained major awards in early childhood care and education. One adult who did not have the required qualification had a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) Evidence was unavailable to demonstrate that the qualification held by one staff member met the minimum requirement of a level 5 award in early childhood care and education, or was recognised by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply outlined that the staff member has applied to the DCDE to have their qualification recognised. In the interim, adjustments to staffing have been made, to ensure that ratios are not disrupted. Going forward, staff files will contain the correct documents, demonstrating evidence of qualification recognition from the DCDE.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the Letter of Qualification Recognition.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted are accepted in meeting the regulatory 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) There was an adequate number of adults available to the children throughout the period of inspection.
- (2) The requirements of the regulation in relation to the minimum ratio of adults to children, were adhered to.
- During the morning of inspection, there were 5 adults working with the 12 children in attendance across the 2 care rooms, who were aged 7 months to 3 years. In addition, the person in charge was available to assist in the care rooms.
 - There same 12 children were present in the afternoon and these children were under the direct care and supervision of 5 adults. The person in charge was also present at this time.
A student and one of the adults, for whom evidence of a recognised qualification was unavailable, were not included in the adult child ratios.
- (8)
- (a) According to the staff roster, the service was operated with at least two adults present at all times. A minimum of two adults were also on duty throughout the inspection process.

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:

- Mealtimes took place at regular intervals throughout the day. Children who attended the Toddler room were observed to have a mid-morning snack shortly before 10.00am, followed by lunch at midday. The person in charge also advised that an afternoon snack was usually accommodated after the children's rest period.
- The mid-morning snack was observed to be a pleasant and social experience, during which time the adults chatted to and assisted the children, as required. Second helpings were also available to children.
- In both care rooms, staff reported that nappy changing was carried out frequently throughout the day and as needed. Observed nappy changing procedures in the Toddler room were handled in a positive and sensitive manner, as the staff member spoke to the children in a kind and playful tone.
- During discussion, the inspector was informed that the children in the Baby room generally followed routine nap times and staff confirmed that children would also be accommodated to sleep outside of said times, should they display signs of tiredness. All of the children who attended the Toddler room were observed to avail of a scheduled rest period in the afternoon.
- The children's need for rest, relaxation and comfort was met, as each of the care rooms was provided with a cosy area, for children to use as needed.
- In the Baby room, adult sized seating was available for staff to comfortably attend to the children's care needs.
- The layout of both care rooms supported the children to move freely within their environments and to engage in their chosen tasks. More active play was also facilitated, as the children had opportunities to spend time in the outdoor area.
- Suitable clothing was worn by the children as they engaged in outdoor activities.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The children were represented within the care rooms through colourful birthday displays and photographs of their families. Samples of the children’s artwork were also visible.
- The Toddler room was appropriately furnished with child sized tables and chairs, which allowed children to comfortably participate in tabletop activities. The Baby room included soft matting, to support crawling babies.
- Age and stage appropriate play materials within the care rooms included the following:
 - Wooden kitchen units, dolls, play food and utensils.
 - Trains sets and handheld vehicles.
 - Building blocks, connectable shapes and magnet tiles.
 - Musical instruments and sound making toys.
 - Books.
 - Jigsaws.
- In addition, the children in the Toddler room were observed to engage in sensory play with sand, playdough and rice.
- A surface of artificial grass was provided in the enclosed outdoor play space. This area was equipped with resources such as seesaws, push toys, activity chairs, a sand tray with digging toys and a basketball hoop, with balls.

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:

- A fob entry system was in place on the entrance door to the childcare facility, with a doorbell for parents/visitors. Exit through the same door was via a door release button, at adult height. This reduced the risk of a child exiting unsupervised.
- A secure enclosure was provided in the outdoor play area, which was directly accessible from the Baby and Toddler rooms.
- Cleaning agents were stored at a height that was inaccessible by children.
- A low-level cupboard in the Toddler room was fitted with a restrictive opening device, to prevent children from accessing potentially harmful items.
- First aid boxes were wall mounted, out of children's reach.

Infection control:

- Dispensers of liquid soap and paper towels were available at the wash hand basins within the service. The children were observed to wash their hands before mealtimes and after outdoor play. A staff member was noted to wash her hands after cleaning a child's nose.
- Within the nappy changing areas, the children's toiletries were individually stored and labelled, which reduced the risk of cross infection.
- All of the cot mattresses in use were waterproof and easy to clean.
- There was individual storage in place for the children's personal belongings; wall hooks were provided for their coats, while bags and wellies were stored on shelves.

Safe sleep:

- While occupied by a sleeping child aged under 12 months, the air temperature of the sleep room fell within the required range of 16°C to 20°C. A temperature reading of 18.8°C was noted. During the afternoon, the sleep room was in use by children who were aged over 12 months and an air temperature of 18°C was recorded.

- The ten-minute interval checks of sleeping children, which were carried out by staff members, had been recorded in writing and were available for review. During discussion, the deputy advised that during these physical checks, the children's breathing, skin colour and position were assessed.

Fire safety:

- Firefighting equipment was wall mounted.
- Fire exits were clear and free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

- The Garda vetting disclosures available for two of the adults who worked at the service, were not dated within the previous three years, in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
- It was observed that two trampolines were being used by children, in the outdoor play area. Trampolines are not permitted in early years services, due to the risk of injury they pose to a child. It was acknowledged that the trampolines were removed, once this was brought to the attention of a staff member.
- A high-level blind cord in the Toddler room was not secured, as required to reduce the risk of injury to a child. The cord had become detached from the tension device and required repair/replacement.

Infection control:

- During three observed nappy changing procedures in the Toddler nappy changing area, the following practices increased the risk of cross infection:
 - The adult's and children's hands were not washed after any of the three nappy changes. Review of the nappy changing procedure displayed in this area, did not specify that the children's hands should be washed following each nappy change.
 - The adult did not change their disposable gloves or apron in between nappy changes.
- Warm running water, required for effective hand washing was unavailable at the following wash hand basins within the service:
 - In the Toddler sanitary facility, the water temperature at each of the warm water taps was recorded at 14.6°C.
 - The water temperature at the wash hand basin in the Toddler care room was recorded at 14.2°C. This tap also had low water pressure.

- In the Baby room nappy changing area, a water temperature of 17.6°C was recorded at the wash hand basin.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The written reply stated that Garda vetting applications have been submitted for both staff members. As a preventive measure, a system will be implemented to track all Garda vetting expiry dates. This will ensure that renewals are applied for at least three months in advance of the three year requirement. A vetting log and reminder system will be maintained.
2. The trampolines were immediately removed from the outdoor play area during the inspection to eliminate the risk to the children. The outdoor area was checked to ensure that no prohibited equipment remains. Trampolines will no longer be allowed on the premises and staff will be made aware of this requirement.
3. The blind cord was immediately re-secured and fixed safely to the wall. The cord is now checked daily as part of our routine safety checks. Any signs of wear and tear will be reported and fixed immediately. It will be ensured that all staff are aware of the safety requirements and this will help maintain compliance and reduce risk.

Infection control:

4. The nappy changing procedure in the changing room has been updated, to ensure that all staff follow correct infection control procedures, including handwashing for both adults and children and changing of PPE after each nappy change. This was implemented immediately and shared with all staff. Monitoring of nappy changing practices will be carried out, to ensure that all staff are following the correct procedure.
5. The person in charge was aware of this issue and had arranged for a plumber to attend the setting. The repair works took place on 19 March, and the issue is now fully resolved. Water temperature and pressure were checked and repaired to ensure they met requirement. To prevent reoccurrence, regular checks of water temperatures and pressure will be carried out and a maintenance schedule will be put in place, including routine servicing of the system.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. The required Garda vetting has been received by the Agency in respect of one of the adults and a copy of the Garda vetting disclosure was submitted in respect of the second adult. Evidence in relation to the service's preventive measure was also forwarded.
2. The statement submitted is accepted as evidence.
3. Photographic evidence.

Infection control:

4. Photographic evidence in relation to the updated nappy changing procedure.
5. Photographic evidence in relation to the water temperature.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted have adequately addressed the non-compliances identified under 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.

Compliance Information

(1) The available First Aid Response (FAR) certificates demonstrated that six of the adults had completed this training. According to the staff roster, at least one of these adults was consistently on duty at the service, during the hours of operation.

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 firefighting 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) Records were available in relation to the fire drills that had been conducted, with the most recently documented drill dated 17 February 2026.
 - (b) Information regarding the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment was on file. The certificate of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that this was carried out on 14 January 2026. The certification of testing for the fire alarm was dated 28 October 2025.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) A fire evacuation notice was not displayed in the service. This posed a risk that staff members and visitors to the service may be unfamiliar with safe evacuation procedures, in the event of a fire.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The fire evacuation procedure is now clearly displayed in all rooms within the service, making it easily visible to staff and visitors. All staff will be made aware of the importance of the procedure being displayed and this will be enforced during inductions and training. Any missing or damaged procedures will be replaced immediately.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 26.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A current insurance certificate was available, along with details of recently renewed cover, which demonstrated that the service was insured to provide full day care. The certificate was valid until 20 March 2027.