

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC100
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Name of Service:	Clonakilty Creche & Playschool
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Address of Service:	Unit H, West Cork Technology Park, Clonakilty, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P85 HD00
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aine Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	26/08/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	33
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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:	Ms. 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

Clonakilty Creche & Playschool is a privately owned full day care service in operation since 2000. The service is registered to cater for children from 0 to 6 years offering a choice of sessional, part time or full day care service and for the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. At time of inspection the children in attendance were aged between 1 and 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 08:00 to 18:00 hours each day Monday to Friday. The premise is situated in the West Cork Technology Park close to Clonakilty town. The service operates out of ground floor rooms situated in a commercial building that were purposely adapted as a childcare setting. The premise consists of three care rooms: the Infant Montessori room, Junior and Senior Montessori. There were adequate adult and children's toilet and nappy changing facilities and a designated separate sleep area off the Infant Montessori room. There is also an administration office, kitchen, storeroom and the outdoor play area is located beside the premise.

Staffing

At time of inspection, there were 11 staff plus the registered provider and business partner who are not serviced based. The 11 staff who work with the children hold a relevant award 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 person in charge and a named deputy to deputise as required.
- (b) The person in charge was present when the inspector arrived at the premise on the day of the unannounced inspection and was present throughout the inspection process.
- (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 13 adults. This included the registered provider, business partner and the 11 staff employed to work directly with the children in the service.
- (a) There were 21 validated references on file from past employers.
- (b) There were 5 validated references available from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of each of the 13 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Two police vetting records were available on file for the two adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more, while over the age of 18 years.
- (4) The 11 adults who worked directly with the children all hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, or an equivalent qualification, as listed 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.

Compliance Information

(1)

On the day of the inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in all three Montessori rooms in operation.

(2) The minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained in the following rooms.

Infant Montessori room

There were 10 children aged between 1 and 2 years present with 3 staff in attendance and there were 9 children attending on a full day care basis in the afternoon. One of the 10 children present in the morning was settling in. At time of inspection, the person in charge was observed relieving staff at lunch time.

Junior Montessori room

There were 10 children aged between 2 and 3 years with 3 of the 10 children attending settling in and 7 children attending full day care with 2 staff in attendance.

Senior Montessori Room

There were 15 children present aged between 3 to 5 years with 2 adults in attendance in the morning There were 17 children in the afternoon as two children arrived at the service at lunch time to attend the afternoon session with 3 staff in attendance.

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 registration forms were reviewed and found to contain all of the elements of information as required by Regulation 15 (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

(h) Electronic records of the children's attendance including the time they arrived and departed from the service each day were individually recorded under the child's name in the service electronic application device.

(i) A hard copy of the weekly staff roster was maintained in the service that recorded each staff members arrival and departure daily to the service. The staff roster indicated the time each staff member went on daily lunch break.

(k) Electronic records of all accidents/incidents were individually recorded under the child's name and sent to the parent/guardian to read and sign, with details on how staff dealt with or treated each incident.

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 staff members were observed in the Senior Montessori room speaking with the children during snack time and using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction with the children which promoted a relaxed atmosphere.
- The younger children were gently placed in highchairs, secured and assisted with feeding in an unhurried and sociable manner. The children were in highchairs for snack and mealtimes only.
- The staff members were observed to be kind, patient and caring to each child as observed during caring duties, facilitating play and one-to-one engagement.
- Staff reported they operated in partnership with parents. Staff recorded the details of the child's day while in the service for example meals/snacks, activities, observations and sleep were recorded individually under the child's name in the service's electronic application device.
- It was observed that children's cues for tiredness were addressed. Children were prepared for sleep in a kind and caring manner; tight clothing was removed, and soothers and comfort blankets offered as required in the sleep room and Infant Montessori room at sleep time.

- The adults were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children's efforts were readily acknowledged and when children were calmly assisted to resolve minor conflicts.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. Independent use of the toilet was encouraged.
- Child height hooks and storage shelving was available to encourage independent dressing and organisation of their personal belongings.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children within the care rooms outside of allocated mealtimes.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The three Montessori rooms in operation were child friendly, bright, laid out with materials largely accessible to the children.
- The air temperatures of the playrooms were between 19°Celsius and 20°Celsius.
- There were an adequate number of child sized tables and chairs available in each playroom. There was an adequate number of highchairs available for the younger children.
- The Infant Montessori room had age-appropriate equipment such as, a selection of books, shape sorters, activity centres, pull along toys, handheld toys for example farm and zoo animals, sound making materials and construction blocks. All were in a good state of repair at time of inspection.
- The Junior and Senior Montessori rooms for the older preschool children had interest areas that included a range of tabletop activities and games to encourage sociable interaction. There were cars and trucks, a fine motor skills area, a home corner suitably furnished with dolls, buggies, dress up and small utensils to prompt imagination and pretend play. There were reading areas and a variety of art and craft materials.
- There was adequate space in the care rooms to accommodate a variety of play activities. A mixture of adult led play and child directed play was facilitated in each room and during outdoor play.
- The shelving was set low to display play materials which were mostly plastic and wooden in nature and easily washable. The low shelving facilitated easy access to the materials by the children.
- The children were observed playing outdoors in group and singular play closely supervised by staff.
- There was a soft seating area in the playrooms and staff informed me that this area allowed a child to opt out of play activities and relax if they so wished.
- Walls of the care rooms were decorated with birthday charts, family photographs and posters and the children's arts and crafts.

- Two of the three playrooms had direct access to the covered designated outdoor play area which had an all-weather and cement surface.
- As the outdoor play area was partially covered the children could avail of outdoor play in all weathers.
- There was ride on and push toys, playhouse, picnic benches and slides to encourage the children to master gross motor skill 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

- All of the snacks and meals observed being eaten on the day were healthy, sufficient and nutritious such as sandwiches, crackers, cheese, yogurts and different fruits at the mid-morning snack.
- There was a hot meal provided by the parents/guardians and reheated for all the children attending full day care as observed on day of inspection.
- The children had access to their own labelled water bottles so that they could help themselves to drinks when they were thirsty.
- There were highchairs available for the younger children. On day of inspection, there were four children that had their lunch meal using a highchair and were observed to be assisted with feeding in an unhurried manner. The remaining children in the Infant Montessori room were seated at low tables and were sitting in individual low size age-appropriate chairs at the table.
- The children were provided with appropriate cutlery and crockery at snack and mealtimes.

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:

- On the inspector's arrival at the service, the main entrance door was found to have been secured and was maintained secure when not in use.
- Internal doors had locks at adult height.
- The outdoor play area was adequately secured with a block wall, locked gates and the building.
- There were no cleaning agents observed accessible to the children.
- First aid boxes were appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children's reach in the playrooms.
- The staff members bags and belonging were stored out of reach of the children.
- Emergency fire exit doors were unobstructed.
- The windows at adult height were opened in the playrooms and children's toilets.

Infection Control:

- Handwashing by the children was observed before mid-morning snack and lunch time meal and after using the toilet and following outdoor play.
- Liquid soap and disposable paper towels were in place at the wash hand basins in the adults and children's toilets and nappy changing facilities on day of inspection.
- A large fridge located in the service kitchen was available for the storage of perishable items.
- Personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste was appropriately disposed of in foot operated pedal bins in the service.
- Non-contact bins were available for the storage of used nappies.
- The adults and children had access to a sufficient number of toilets and wash hand basins on day of inspection.
- The children nappy changing toiletries were situated within labelled baskets beside the nappy changing facility.
- In general, the playrooms, toilets and nappy changing facilities in the service were visibly clean on day of inspection. There were weekly cleaning schedules on display.

Safe Sleep:

- A designated sleep room was located beside the Infant Montessori room. There were 9 standard cots. Each of the mattresses was fitted with a waterproof mattress cover.
- It was observed that sleeping children had ten-minute physical observations conducted, recording position, colour and breathing of the child.
- The air temperature of the sleep room registered at 20°Celsius on day of inspection.
- There were a sufficient number of stackable beds available for the children over the age of 2 years that required a sleep. The Infant Montessori playroom was converted into a sleep room after lunch.
- There was an adequate distance observed between each cot and stacking bed when children were asleep in the sleep room and Infant Montessori room on day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency fire exit doors were noted to be maintained free from any obstruction on day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. In general, it was found that the water from the thermostatically controlled wash hand basin hot taps were not spontaneous in the service when checked on arrival to the premise. For example, in the children's nappy changing area beside the Infant Montessori room, and in the wash hand basin located at child height in the Infant Montessori playroom. This was also found in the children's toilets, the wash hand basins in the Junior and Senior Montessori rooms. On review between 13:00 and 13:30 hours, there was thermostatically controlled hot water at all the named wash hand basins except for two. One child size wash hand basin in the Infant Montessori playroom and one wash hand basin in the nappy changing area located beside Infant Montessori playroom. This would impede effective hand washing, increasing the risk of cross infection

Safe Sleep:

2. The parents provided the linen for the sleep equipment pertaining to their child while in the service. There was one cot mattress observed not covered with an infant sheet but with an adult sheet. This is considered poor safe sleep practise.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

The registered provider stated a plumber visited and replaced a valve that was not working. This plumber is local to the service and has agreed to prioritize visiting the service in future if required.

Safe Sleep:

The registered provider stated the sheet was removed, and staff and parents were reminded that adult sheets were not permitted in the service going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

A photograph of the new valve was submitted.

Safe Sleep:

A photograph of a cot was sent in.

Summary Comment

The requirement of Regulation 23 has been met.

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) There was one adult working in the service that had a current certified First Aid Responder certificate (FAR) and she was present on day of inspection.

(2) (a) There were sufficiently stocked first aid boxes available in the service, which was safely stored out of reach of children.

(b) At all times when the service was in operation, first aid supplies were accessible to the 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 06 August 2025
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced on the 27 June 2025. The emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on 18 July 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.