

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC111			
Name of Service:	Coomhola Highscope Community Playgroup			
Address of Service:	Coorleary, Coomhola, Bantry, Co. Cork			
Eircode:	P75 W984			
Name of Registered Provider:	Siobhan O'Sullivan			
Service type:	Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	26/11/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	8
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			

Description of service

Coomhola Highscope Community Playgroup is a community-based service, which is registered to provide sessional care for children aged 2 to 6 years. The service currently caters for children from the age of 2 years 8 months to 6 years and for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily opening hours are from 09:00 to 12:00 and from 12:05 to 15:05 hours each day Monday to Friday. The service is located in a rural setting and operates from a single storey, detached wooden cabin style structure which is situated on the grounds of Coomhola National School.

The service offers a large playroom with high ceilings. There are adequate toilet facilities for children and staff located beside the playroom. A nearby modular building provides storage and a staff office. The children have access to a partially covered outdoor play area beside the playroom. The outdoor play area is shared in rotation with the junior and senior infants in the national school.

Staffing

There were 5 adults attached to the service. There were 4 staff employed to work directly with the early years children including the named registered provider/the person in charge in the service. There was 1 of the 4 staff employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme. The staff who work directly with the early years children all hold a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education. There was one third level student on work placement in attendance in the service during the morning session at time of inspection.

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 focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25 and 28. However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8. 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.

Additional Information

On day of inspection, the service was found operating outside of their approved registration status. A referral was sent to the Services Operating Outside Registration Team for follow up.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider/person in charge, deputy, staff, student 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 named person in charge and a deputy available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The deputy was present on the inspectors arrival on the premises on day of the inspection. The registered provider/person in charge visited the premise to meet with the inspectorate during the morning session on day of inspection.
- (2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for 4 staff members and one student on work placement. The following records were available for the five adults:
- (a) Of the required 10 references, 7 references were from previous employers with records of validation on file.
 - (b) The remaining 3 references from another source other than a previous employer with records of the required validation on file.
 - (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of each of the five adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as 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) A police vetting record was on file for the two 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 had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications, or a qualification deemed to be equivalent. There was a student on work placement who is currently studying to attain a childcare qualification.

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)(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 person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on day of the inspection.

(2)
During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were observed working directly with the children at all times
There were 11 children present in the morning and 8 children were present in the afternoon aged between 2 years 6 months and 6 years with 2 adults in attendance at all times. There was a student present in the service on work placement during the morning session.

(8)
(a) Two adults were present at all times during the hours of operation.

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 service promoted healthy eating and the food provided by the parents and guardians was observed to be healthy and nutritious. Staff provided the children with appropriate cutlery and crockery and the children were offered appropriate assistance by the adults for example opening cartons and peeling fruit. The service also provided food for the children for example, buttered toast is given to children on arrival and a fruit and vegetable snack is also provided. It was observed that the children were offered slices of apple and cucumber on day of inspection. There was a selection of dried foods, fruit and bread available in the service for the children. There was a microwave available to reheat a hot meal the parents or guardians provided.
- The children had access to their drinking water bottles throughout the day.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. The staff members were observed to assist where required each of the children when hand washing and hand drying, and the children were supported and encouraged prior to eating, post toileting and outdoor play.
- 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 the rules for being together as seen on day of inspection when children were observed practising various songs and poems. The children were observed waiting their turn, sharing the experience and the activity which fostered the children's language skills, emotional and cognitive development.
- The staff members were observed to work well together and the children were familiar with the routine.
- During observed tabletop activities, the children were supported and encouraged by the staff, who acknowledged their efforts and achievements.
- Children had sufficient space to move about freely indoors and outdoors. Transitions were made as smooth as possible when children moved from their room to the outdoor play area whereby, they had

access to play equipment and play materials. A mixture of adult led play and child directed play was facilitated throughout the day indoors and during outdoor play.

- Staff stated that regular updates and information was furnished to parents and guardians via the services electronic system and at drop off and collection times.

Physical and Material Environment

- The premise was clean, bright and well maintained with openable windows that provided natural light and ventilation.
- The playroom was adequately resourced with a variety of play materials that were easily accessible to the children on low level open shelving units, providing the children with choice in their chosen activities.
- Children had their own cubby space for the storage of their bags and personal belongings such as art works to be taken home.
- The playroom was furnished with sufficient child sized tables and chairs. There was a home corner with a wide range of kitchen and home utensils to initiate pretend play such baking, cooking and minding house. There were dolls, dress up and buggies. The service provided both small and large construction items to allow children to be creative and participate in role play. Tabletop activities were available to encourage fine, motor skill practice. There were cars, trucks and farm items for the children to enjoy.
- The cosy rest alcove displayed a wall mounted book bracket which presented a wide range of books which had been selected to correspond with the current topics namely, autumn, hibernation and migration.
- There was a partially covered outdoor play area provided beside the premise located within the grounds of the primary school. The outdoor play area had an all-weather surface. The children have access to the outdoor play area in rotation with the children attending the national school. The outdoor play area was equipped with a wide range of gross motor skill materials for example ride on and push toys, balance bars and beam.

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.

- The first aid box was appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- The room temperature was maintained at 18°C.
- Water temperatures at the wash hand basins were thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C.

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities was available in the toilet facilities. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were in place.
- Handwashing by the children was observed before mid-morning snack and after toileting and outdoor play.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be sanitised before and after snack time.
- Lunches were stored in snack boxes and stored in the service fridge.
- The children's coats and bags were appropriately stored on wall hooks, above floor level.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. There was no protective covers on two of the fluorescent ceiling lights in the preschool room and one fluorescent ceiling light in the children's sanitary accommodation.

Safe Sleep:

3. There was no suitable sleep equipment provided in the service for the children (all over 2 years 8 months) who were in attendance in the service for 5 hours or more that required a sleep.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In the corrective and preventative response (CAPA) received, evidence of an application for Garda vetting with Tusla for one staff member was reviewed, however, a copy of the complete Garda vetting has not been submitted for one of the staff to the inspector to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt.
2. In the corrective and preventative response (CAPA) received, the registered provider stated, the fluorescent ceiling lights with no protective covers that were present in the playroom and children's toilet

at time of inspection have all been removed and replaced with a new type of fluorescent safety light that do not require a cover as the ceiling light is enclosed in a special safety sealed unit.

Safe Sleep:

3. In the corrective and preventative response (CAPA) received, stated, a stacking bed had been purchased as a suitable sleep equipment for any child over 2 years 8 months that requires a sleep while attending the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the Garda application record to Tusla for one staff member was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. Photographic evidence of the newly installed fluorescent ceiling lights in the service was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Safe Sleep:

3. Photographic evidence of the newly purchased stacking bed was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

- Correspondence forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate was examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 23, General Safety non-compliance number 2 and Safe Sleep non-compliance number 3 of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.
- The non-compliance in relation to Regulation 23, General Safety, number 1. remains out outstanding.

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

(2)

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

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Non-Compliance Information

- The current insurance certificate detailed the category of service covered was sessional, with insurance for a maximum of 18 children until the 27 March 2026. No other category of service was outlined on the insurance certificate. The service was not adequately insured to operate outside a sessional care service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- In the corrective and preventative response (CAPA) received, stated the insurance was amended immediately post the inspection and the service is now insured to operate a full day care service. Twenty children is the maximum number of children insured to attend the service at any one time. The expiry date of the current insurance cover is the 27 March 2026.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the current insurance certificate was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate

Summary Comment

- Correspondence forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate was examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 28, Insurance, of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

(3) Where a registered provider has been unable for good and proper reason to notify the Agency within the time specified in paragraph (1) or (2), as the case may be, of a change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2), the registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing of the change as soon as possible thereafter.

Non-Compliance Information

(1). (3)

- The registered provider had not informed the Agency in writing that the service was operating outside of the service current registration status. The service is registered as a sessional service. On day of inspection, it was found that four children were in attendance in the service for six hours which is outside the approved registration status.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- In the corrective and preventative response (CAPA) received, stated that a change in circumstances form was forwarded to the Department for Services Operating Outside of Registration Status (SOORS) to register the service to operate a full day care service. The service is currently registered to operate a sessional service only. Consultation is ongoing with SOORS and the service is currently seeking advice in relation to planning permission from Cork County Council to operate a full day care service.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the completed change in circumstances record sent by the service to the Department for Services Operating Outside of Registration Status (SOORS)
- A copy of the correspondence sent from SOORS to the registered provider of the service.

Summary Comment

- The non-compliance in relation to Regulation 8, (1)(3) remains outstanding as the service is currently seeking advice in relation to planning permission to operate a full day care service in the building. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the SOORS Department upon receipt. The SOORS Department and the registered provider will also keep the Inspectorate up to date. This issue will be reviewed on the next inspection.