

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC150
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Name of Service:	Fermoy Community Preschool Playgroup
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Address of Service:	College Road, Fermoy, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P61 CH96
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Name of Registered Provider:	Karina Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	23
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD5Y
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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

Fermoy Community Preschool Playgroup is a community-based service in operation since 1985, providing early years care and education on a full day care, part-time and sessional basis. While registered to accommodate children aged from 2 - 6 years of age children currently attending are aged from 2 years 8 months to 6 years of age. The service is open Monday to Friday, from 08:00 to 16:15, 38 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning from 9:00 to 12 noon and in the afternoon from 13:00 to 16:15. A Stay and Play option is also available from 12 noon until 14:30.

Fermoy Community Preschool Playgroup is located in the urban area of Fermoy in North Cork. It operates from part of a former convent which has been converted for use as a childcare facility. The service comprises of an entrance hallway, storeroom/staff room, office, two interconnected care rooms, kitchen, sleep/sensory room, and a messy room adjoining one of the care rooms. There are two adult and four children's sanitary areas available. Children have direct access from the two care rooms to two outdoor play areas, and a third secure outdoor play area is located directly opposite the service.

Staffing

There are eleven staff members employed by the service, six of whom were observed working directly with the children. Of these two staff members were responsible for providing support to children under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The manager facilitated the inspection process, and the registered provider is not service based.

Methodology

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

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

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation

- Discussion with relevant staff

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

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 registered provider, deputy, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
Through conversation with the manager, at the introductory meeting, it was found that the details of the registered provider did not match those on the Tusla national register. Not ensuring the correct information had been submitted to the registration department did not allow for accurate service details to be retained and published by Tusla on the National register. It was acknowledged that when informed the manager completed a change in circumstances form which was submitted to the registration department on the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the manager;

(1) A change in circumstance was completed and sent on the day of inspection. All documentation will be checked thoroughly to ensure that the correct details have been recorded correctly.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) The statement from the registered provider has been accepted. A copy of the email sent containing the change in circumstances was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the manager have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 8.

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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) The registered provider ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person available to deputise.

(b) The staff roster evidenced that both the designated person in charge and the named person were on the premises, as observed by the inspector, while the early years children were children present.

(c) Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities in the service and a management structure was available on a notice board in the office.

(2) Recruitment files, of the eleven staff members employed in the service and the registered provider, were reviewed;

(a) (b) There were twenty-four validated references; eleven from past employers and thirteen from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for staff members who work directly with the children, demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Overseas police disclosures were on file for two adults who had lived outside the State for six months consecutively as adults.

(4) There was evidence that ten adults had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. In addition, one adult had a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The registered provider does not require a qualification in childcare.

Part III – Management and Staff

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

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

Non-Compliance Information

On review the following policy required further development;

Healthy Eating Policy – did not include the following details; measures to ensure that sufficient, suitable and nutritious food was available to children availing of full day care and a menu including a wide variety of food.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the manager;

- (1) The healthy eating policy has been reviewed and updated to include the necessary information. All staff have been informed of the revised changes.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) A copy of the revised and updated healthy eating policy was received in the office of the inspectorate. The manager's statement has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the manager have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 10.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working with the children at all times.

(2) The adult/child ratios were met.

All of the children present in the care rooms were aged from 2 years 8 months to 6 years of age.

Morning Stars

There was one full day care, six part-time and nine sessional children in attendance in the morning with three staff members, one of whom was an AIM Support Worker.

Shining Stars

There was one full day care, six part-time and eleven sessional children in attendance with three staff members in the morning, one of whom was an AIM Support Worker.

Stay and Play (Operating from the Morning Stars care room)

There were seventeen children in attendance from 12:00 until 14:30 with three staff members.

Little Stars (Operating from the Shining Stars care room)

There were six sessional children in attendance from 13:00 until 16:00 with two staff members.

- (8)
- (a) The staff roster indicated that at least two staff members were on the premises at all times, this was observed by the inspector in practice on the day.

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

(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;

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (f) Individual medical plans were on file for two children for whom they may be required in the event of an emergency. The manager stated that all staff are trained to administer the required medication in the event of an emergency.
- (3)
- (c) The individual medical plans were available on the premises for the inspector to review.

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. Food and snacks were provided at regular intervals throughout the day. Staff stated that breakfast of wheat and oat-based cereals was available between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning and mid-morning breakfast, served at 11:30, was noted to consist of filled sandwiches, rice and eggs, vegetables, berried fruits and yogurt. Lunch was served at 13:30 with afternoon snack available later in the day.
- Each child had an individually labelled water bottles, which was available at all times. These were stored in the fridge when they were not in use.
- The children were observed accessing the toilets independently in both care rooms with adults nearby to provide assistance and reminders to dry hands.
- Children's independence skills were encouraged. Examples included children observed zipping up their jackets and putting on their indoor shoes by themselves being praised by staff, who were nearby assisting and supporting younger children who required help.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN:

- During meals and table top activities staff members were observed sitting at the tables with the children engaging in social conversations which included a conversation about a children's television programme with their favourite characters. Staff interactions were observed to be positive, and the children appeared happy and relaxed.
- Children in both care rooms were supported by staff to engage positively with each other in activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard reminding children to be mindful of the feelings of those playing beside them.
- A staff member furnished the inspector with learning journals that the keyworker completes for each child. Within the journal were examples of the child's artwork, related to curriculum themes, and photographs of activities carried out by the children.
- Staff stated communication with parents/guardians is mainly through a personal and group messaging application and verbally at collection and drop off where information is exchanged on the children's daily activities.
- Fortnightly meetings between staff and management were stated as taking place with topics of a recent meeting provided to the inspector such as decorations for the community Christmas tree, issues related to children and policies and procedures.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Both care rooms were well laid out in clearly defined areas which were well resourced with equipment and materials suitable for the age and stage of development of the children attending the service.
- Toys and equipment were laid out in baskets and drawers positioned on low -level shelving which provided ease of access, offered choice and promoted independence.
- Each of the care rooms had direct access to a dedicated outdoor play area, which was partially covered. In addition, there was a large outdoor play area located opposite the service. The children had access to a variety of play equipment, including a climbing wall, caterpillar tunnel, cars and ride ons which offered opportunities to practice gross motor skill of climbing, balancing, pushing and crawling.

Non-Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- (1) The food requirements for full day care, that of a hot meal at lunch time, were not being adhered to in the service. The inspector observed two full day care children staying on for lunch, one received a hot lunch, and a second child did not. In conversation, staff were unaware of the requirement for a hot lunch to be served to all children staying on for lunch on a full day care basis.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the manager;

- (1) Children staying on for five hours or longer have a hot meal served at lunch time. All staff have been informed.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) Photographs of hot meals served in the service were received in the office of the inspectorate. Documentation was also received which evidenced that parent's/guardians are aware of the requirement to provide a hot meal when a child is staying for five hours or more in the service.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the manager have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) The inspector observed that a separate sleep room was in place since the last inspection following a change in circumstances; moving from a sessional to a full day care setting. The following requirements were observed in place:
- There were three stackable beds available with fitted sheets, blankets and pillows suitable for children aged over two years of age.
 - Ambient lighting could be achieved from a blind on the door and the operation of the artificial lighting in the sleep room.

- Each care room had a designated rest/quiet area. These were furnished with wooden sofas and seats, both fitted with soft cushions, where the children could sit away from noisy activities.

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 main double entrance gates to the service were secured when the inspector arrived. These could only be accessed by code or a buzzer system, preventing unauthorised adults from entering the service and unsupervised children leaving the service grounds.
- All internal doors including adult bathrooms, care rooms, kitchen and store room were secured to prevent children accessing unsupervised areas.
- Windows in the care room were adequately secured to prevent children from exiting or falling from them.
- The blind cord in the sleep room was secured with a hook which was inaccessible by the children.
- The indoor and outdoor equipment and toys appeared to be in good condition and well maintained.
- Flexes and cables in the care rooms on electrical equipment such as radios were stored out of reach of the children.
- All indoor waste and recycle materials were stored in pedal operated bins helping to prevent the spread of infection.
- All cleaning agents were stored in high cupboards in the care rooms, inaccessible to the children.
- The perimeter of the two outdoor play areas, accessible from the care rooms, were secured with high stone walls. The third outdoor play area perimeter, located opposite the service, was secured with metal panelling and a secured gate.

Infection Control:

- Staff were observed regularly sweeping the floor and sanitising the tables before and after the serving and eating of food. Further cleaning duties, between each session, were also observed including cleaning of regularly touched areas and cleaning of the fridges.
- Mop heads were removed and stored for washing after use. Staff stated these are washed daily and this was evidenced in the service on the day.

- Children's coats and bags were stored on individual hooks in each care room, off the floor area.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in a fridge in the kitchen, to prevent the food from spoiling.
- Children observed handwashing in the Shining Stars sanitary area had access to thermostatically controlled hot water which was recorded as 40.5°C, dispensing foam soap and dispensing automatic paper roll to dry their hands. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Disposal aprons and gloves, along with a sealed, pedal operated nappy bin were available to prevent the spread of infection and cross contamination.
- Cleaning and fridge checklists were furnished to the inspector for the care rooms and were noted to be complete and up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medications were stored in original containers in the adult fridge in the kitchen. This area was secured to ensure the children could not gain access.
- Auto injector pens were available, if required, for two children for whom they were required in the event of an emergency. These were stored out of reach of the children.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping on the day
- Stackable beds were placed more than 50 centimetres apart.
- Templates were available for recording ten-minute physical sleep checks. Details included the position, colour, breathing, room temperature and signature of the person carrying out the sleep checks.

Fire Safety:

- All fire doors were unobstructed.
- Firefighting equipment was secured by brackets to the walls in the service.
- The fire assembly points located beside the outdoor play area were clearly visible with appropriate signage.

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) Certificates were on file to evidence that all eleven staff members were trained as First Aid Responders (FAR).

The staff roster indicated that there was a person trained in first aid available at all times, while the early years children were present in the service.

(2)

(a) (b) The well stocked first aid bag was stored within easy reach of the adults in the care room on a shelf behind the care room door and was available at all times.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(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) Written records of the fire drills that took place in the service were furnished to the inspector. The last date recorded was noted as 13 November 2024, with drills observed recorded for both the morning and afternoon sessions.
- (b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting certificate was dated 17 September 2024, and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 22 November 2023.
- (2)
- (c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were available on the premises for review by the inspector.
- (4) The fire procedure notices detailing the steps to follow in the event of a fire or emergency were displayed in each care room on the wall.

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 that the service was insured. Written records of insurance documents were furnished to the inspector which included the following details;

- The contact details of the insurance company
- The name and address of the service
- The number of children for whom the service is insured: 44
- The type of service: Full Day Care

The manager stated that separate building insurance is in place.