

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC160
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Name of Service:	Freemount Community Playgroup
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Address of Service:	Community Centre, Freemount, Charleville, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P56 P893
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ben Carroll
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	26/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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Inspection undertaken by:	F Collins
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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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Freemount Community Playgroup CLG is a part-time service located in Freemount village in the community hall. The service provides a part-time service for up to five hours daily to the children from the surrounding area. The service is registered to provide care to children aged between 2 and 6 years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 9:00 and 14:00 hours.

The premises is a large ground floor room of the community centre with one large playroom, an office area, adult and children's toilet facilities, an enclosed outdoor play area and access during inclement weather to the large community hall.

There were 15 children present on the morning of the inspection.

Staffing

There were five adults on the staff roster and four adults were present on the day of inspection. All five adults work directly with the children.

The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 registered provider, the person in charge, the 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) The registered provider ensured that there was a person in charge in the service during the operation of the service. On the day of inspection, the person in charge was on the premises. There was a named deputy for the service in the event the person in charge was not onsite or not available, this person was known to all staff.

(b) The staff roster indicated there was at all times a named a person in charge or a named deputy onsite.

(2) There were five adults named as being available to work in the service. All five staff files were assessed.

(a) Of the ten references required for the five staff, seven of these references were available from past employers and these references were validated as required.

(b) Two references were available from a source other than a past employer and these references were validated.

(c) Up to date Garda Vetting was available on file for each of the five staff named as working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required for any staff.

(4) Four of the five staff that work with the children daily were qualified at Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. The additional adult was working in a supernumerary capacity.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) One reference on file from a past employer was not validated by the registered provider. Not ensuring references are validated may potentially allow an unsuitable adult have access to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) The reference from the past employer has been validated by the registered provider with a commitment to validate all references prior to staff starting in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) (a) A copy of the validated reference was received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this Regulation have been met following receipt of the corrective and preventive actions and the evidence received.

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.

Compliance Information

The policies as indicated on Schedule 5 of the Regulations were available onsite for inspection.

The following policies were reviewed and were up to date and in line with best practice:

- The complaints policy.
- The fire safety policy.
- The policy on accidents and incidents.

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) There were adequate staff available to the children on the day of inspection to meet the needs of the children in attendance. Three staff were available to care for 15 pre-school children.
- (2) The adult child ratio was correct during the inspection.

The morning of the inspection there were two qualified staff and one staff member working in a supernumerary capacity caring for 15 children.

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:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

Compliance Information

(1) (j) No medications were administered in the service for which records could be reviewed.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (i) The staff roster available on the day of inspection did not include the staff breaks or start and finish times for the staff. Not having transparent records of what staff are caring for children and the number of staff available may potentially lead to not being able to assess that there were adequate adults available to care for the children throughout the operation of the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (i) The staff roster has been updated and now includes start and finish times and breaks being taken. The roster is kept on file and is displayed in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) (i) A copy of the staff roster has been received which indicates start and finish times and break times of all staff who work in the service.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met following review of the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- The children were offered their snack mid-morning and all of the children ate together. The children had access to their drinks at all times and cups were hanging on the wall near the sink with each child's name and photograph to allow children to take a drink at any time throughout the day. Drinks of milk and water were offered at snack time and the service promoted a healthy eating policy and examples of the food provided for the snacks included fruit, sandwiches, yogurts, cheese and crackers
- The children in the service were supported to be independent in toileting and the staff supported this and supervised hand washing. When assistance was needed after a toileting accident the staff dealt with this appropriately, changing clothes and maintaining the privacy of the child in question.
- No child in the service was wearing a nappy.
- Rest and relaxation areas were with a couch, some mats and cushions available to the children.
- The children played outside for a short period of time late in the morning due to the very wet conditions on the day of inspection, the children dressed up for outdoors when the rain eased off.
- There was no restriction on the movement of the children and the children were observed to move about freely.

Supporting Relationships:

- The staff within the service were consistent and were working in the service over a number of years, the children knew their carers well and were engaged with them in their activities throughout the morning. Children sought the support of the staff when needed.
- The staff were observed to support and engage with the children in their activities outside and were observed to initiate activities as required but continuing to maintain a child led approach.
- The staff sat with the children during snack time and engaged with them, assisted them as required and created a social space.

- Communication with parents was at drop off and collection. All policies had been given to the parents and guardians prior to their child starting in the service.
- Parents were noted to be invested in the service with a parent bringing calves to the service the day before the inspection so the children could see them and on the day of the inspection followed up with farming catalogues which had pictures of the cattle the children had seen.

Physical And Material Environment:

- The care room was well developed with many areas of interest, appropriate height tables and chairs and access to library and rest areas. There was a sand table to support sensory play, a home corner to promote imaginary play. Books to read and promote story telling to support speech and language development and activities outdoors to promote risk taking and large motor movements.
- There were adequate materials available to the children who could choose their activity independently or with help. The toys and activities were age appropriate to the ages of the children attending the service.
- The care room had accessible shelving with materials that were accessible to the children promoting independence.
- Adult sized chairs were available.
- The children's artwork was displayed.

Programme of Activities:

- The plan for the day was displayed on a large board with pictures of what the plan for the day would entail and the children could see this and staff used it to indicate what was happening.
- Transitions were managed by the staff giving notice to the children of cleaning up and of the next activity and when needed gave additional time with the children were invested in an activity.

Outdoor Area:

- The outdoor area was easily accessible. The children had access to a large soft matting area which had climbing toys, push along toys and ride on toys. They also had access to sand play equipment and a mud kitchen. Children had access to this secure area daily.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit doors were secured with chain locks along with thumb turn locks. No reason for this was available on the risk assessments available. No child according to the staff posed a flight risk. The locking of the doors with chain locks may impede the safe and fast evacuation of the children and staff in the event of a fire. The person in charge agreed to follow this up with the fire officer.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire Safety:

- A buildings engineer was contracted to review the fire requirements of the service, this review has been completed and all chain locks have been removed and further recommendations have been made to ensure the safety of the children in the service. The registered provider has informed the inspectorate that the recommendations of the report are being implemented.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire Safety:

- A copy of the engineer's report has been received which states the building was substantively compliant and recommended some improvements.

Summary Comment

Following receipt of the engineer's report and the corrective and preventive action plan the requirements for this regulation have been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that each child attending the service was signed in on arrival and signed out at time of leaving the service. This record was kept in writing and held at the door into the service for ease of use.

(3) (a) The registered provider ensured that no unauthorised adult had access to the children in the service.

(b) The registered provider ensured that all visitors to the service were signed in and the inspector was requested to sign in on arrival. Previous records of visitors to the service were evident. This ensures that no unauthorised adult enters the premises without the staff being aware of their presence.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The children were supervised at all times by the staff in the service as evidenced on inspection. When staff were required to assist a child in the toilets the remaining two staff were caring for the children.

When the children were playing outside all staff were outside with them and if a child needed to go inside for something they were accompanied by a staff member.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-*
- (a) *the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) *the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) *the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) *a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
 - (b) *the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*
- (3) *A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-*
- (a) *include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*
 - (b) *be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there was a complaints policy available within the service.
- (a) This policy indicated the procedures that a person who wants to make a complaint to the service is required to follow.
 - (b) This policy also specified how the complaint would be dealt with and
 - (c) How the person who was making the complaint would be kept informed of their complaint.
- (2) (a) The registered provider ensured that records were available of each complaint.
- (b) These records outlined how the complaint had been managed by the service, there was paperwork available to indicate how the complaint was dealt which followed the policy.
- (3) (a) The records in relation to the way the complaint reviewed was dealt with followed the procedures outlined in the policy.
- (b) This paperwork was available to the inspector on the day of inspection