

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC170
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Name of Service:	Gortroe Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Gortroe, Youghal, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P36 R520
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Cronin Fox
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

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

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Gortroe Pre-School is a privately owned, early years service. It is registered to provide sessional care for children aged 2 to 6 years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year, with daily opening hours from 9.00am to 12.00pm.

Located in the village of Gortroe in east Cork, the service operates from within a community centre. There is one care room, with direct access to the enclosed outdoor play space. Adjoining children's sanitary facilities are provided and a staff sanitary facility is also available.

Staffing

The registered provider employs four staff, each of whom is involved in the direct care of the children. Two of these adults are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme and one adult provides relief cover. A recognised award in Early Childhood Care and Education has been attained by each staff member, including the registered provider. A second level student was also undertaking work experience at 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, 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 person in charge of the service was the registered provider, who had also nominated a designated deputy, to deputise in her absence. This information was documented in writing.
- (b) The duration of the inspection was facilitated by the registered provider. Further examination of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider was present on the premises throughout the hours of operation.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the five adults and one student, who worked at the setting, were assessed for compliance and the following was noted:
- (a) Nine of the 12 required references had been provided by past employers and corresponding reference validations were also in place.
- (b) The remaining three required written and validated references were from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Garda vetting was not required for the student, who was under 18 years of age, however, this documentation was available.
- (d) Employment history records demonstrated that police vetting from other jurisdictions was required for one of the adults and the relevant documentation was in place.
- (4) Copies of recognised qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or as recognised by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, were on file in respect of the five staff members.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Throughout the period of inspection, it was noted that an adequate number of adults worked with the children who attended the service.
- (3) The correct adult to child ratio was maintained on the day of the inspection. There were four staff members working directly with 18 children, who were aged 3 to 5 years.

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

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) Attendance records over a seven week period were reviewed by the inspector and demonstrated compliance.
- (j) The inspector was advised by the registered provider that none of the children who attended the service were currently in receipt of medication. An appropriate record template was in place for staff to document the administration of medication, should it be required.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

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

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Supporting relationships:

- The adults were observed to be patient, kind and reassuring when interacting with the children in their care. For example, staff members used positive language when acknowledging the children's participation and promptly comforted any children who became upset.
- The inspector was advised that the children had been learning about community workers. As part of this theme, a visit from the local fire brigade was accommodated on the morning of the inspection. During the visit, the children appeared interested and engaged, as they sat and listened to the firemen and staff members readily supported the children to interact and take turns.
- The registered provider advised that methods of sharing information with parents included a childcare application, a messaging application, frequent newsletters, face to face discussion, parent teacher meetings and phone calls. Examples of the messages communicated to parents were viewed by the inspector and were noted to include reminders of upcoming events and photographs of recent activities.
- Monthly staff meetings were held to discuss plans, training, issues arising and service policies. Written accounts of said meetings were maintained and a sample was presented for review. In addition, staff members used a messaging application to share ideas and daily informal meetings also took place.

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:

- There were no cables or trailing flexes accessible to children within the care room.
- Firefighting equipment was safely wall mounted.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the children's reach.

Infection control:

- The children's wash hand basins were supplied with warm running water. Liquid soap, paper towels and foot pedal operated bins were provided in the children's and adults' sanitary areas. The children were supervised as they washed their hands, before the snack break.
- Perishable foods were refrigerated prior to consumption. This ensured that such foods were maintained within the safe temperature range of 0°C to 5°C.
- Staff members were observed to sanitise the tables both before and after the mid-morning snack.
- The children's sanitary facility was naturally ventilated through an open window.

Fire safety:

- It was noted that the fire exit from the care room was free from obstruction.

Outing:

- During the morning, the staff and children took a short walk to a nearby car park, where a visit from the local fire brigade was facilitated.
- On the way to the car park, the children were observed to walk in pairs, while holding hands. The outing was well supervised by the adults, who reminded the children to stay close to the wall during the walk and continued to ensure good supervision practices on arrival at the car park.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

Warm running water was not available at the wash hand basin in the staff sanitary facility. This may impede effective handwashing. It was acknowledged that the water heater appeared to be switched on, however, the water was not sufficiently heated. The issue of cold water at the staff wash hand basin was also noted at the

previous inspection on 17 May 2023 and in that instance, the CAPA response stated that the hot water had not been switched on.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The written response from the registered provider outlined that the hot running water had been functioning correctly since the last inspection. However, on the day of the recent inspection, the water would not heat up. The registered provider was advised that this was due to an air lock and the warm water is now functioning correctly. As a preventive measure, the registered provider will make contact with the hall committee, to ensure that this heating system is serviced on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the statement from the registered provider, regulatory compliance is determined to have 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) Current First Aid Responder (FAR) certification was available for the registered provider and the staff roster indicated that this adult was available at all times, while the service was in operation.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

While it was acknowledged that the first aid materials were safely stored in a wall mounted cabinet, insufficient supplies were maintained. There were no extra-large wound dressings available, none of the available eye pads were in date and only three of the large wound dressings were in date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply from the registered provider stated that six extra-large wound dressings, three large wound dressings and six eye pads have been purchased and placed in the first aid box. As a preventive measure, the dates on the first aid supplies will be checked every three months, instead of every six months. A checklist has been placed on the outside of the first aid box, which will ensure that any item about to expire will be flagged at each check.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate indicated that adequate cover was in place for the sessional service, with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

(b) The entrance door to the care room was secured when not in use and the outdoor play space was enclosed by a combination of high-level fencing, walls and a secured gate.

Non-Compliance Information

- (c)
1. There was a thick accumulation of dust visible on the mechanical vent, in the staff sanitary facility. While sound from the vent was audible, a musty malodour was apparent and there was evidence of mould on the ceiling. This posed a risk of inadequate ventilation.
- (d)
2. In the children's sanitary facility, there were plaster chippings on the floor of one of the toilet cubicles. The corners of both toilet cubicles and the skirting boards were dirty and cobwebs were also visible in the area. The risk of cross infection due to lack of cleanliness in the children's sanitary facility, was also found at the previous inspection on 17 May 2023. The CAPA response at the time outlined that all areas of the sanitary facility would be cleaned daily. However, this remained an issue.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (c)
1. The CAPA response stated that the staff sanitary facility has been cleaned thoroughly and that the vent was opened and cleaned. In July 2025, the staff sanitary facility will be painted and the ventilation system will be thoroughly cleaned again. The hall committee will ensure that this is working correctly. In addition, the registered provider has arranged to meet with the committee to make plans for toilet facility renovations.
- (d)

2. The children's sanitary facilities have been deep cleaned. Staff have advised that due to the window being open for ventilation, dust comes in from the outdoor play area, as the mud kitchen is located outside. The sanitary facilities will be deep cleaned every day, specifically where the dust enters. A notice has been placed on the wall in the sanitary accommodation to remind staff of this. The reply also stated that new skirting boards will be fitted in the children's sanitary facilities, during the summer months, in order to prevent the wall from becoming damaged in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (c)
1. A photograph of the cleaned vent and a letter to the hall committee in relation to upgrading the sanitary facilities.
- (d)
2. Signage alerting staff to deep clean the sanitary facilities each day.

Summary Comment

The responses submitted by the registered provider are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements. However, the ventilation in the staff sanitary facility and the cleanliness of both sanitary facilities will be reviewed at the next inspection.