

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CC253 |
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| Name of Service: | Mahon CDP Community Creche |
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| Address of Service: | Unit 4 5 6, Avenue De Rennes, Mahon, Cork, Co Cork |
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| Eircode: | T12 W289 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Christine Fahy |
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| Service type: | Full Day |
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| Date of Inspection: | 06/11/2025 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 17 | PM | 17 |
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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 & D Cotter |
| Title: | Early Years Inspectors |

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).

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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

Mahon CDP Community Creche is registered to provide full day care to children aged 0 to 6 years. Daily opening hours are from 8.45am to 3.00pm.

Within the premises, there are two operational care rooms, one of which has an adjoining sleep room. Children's sanitary facilities are available adjacent to the care rooms and a staff sanitary facility is also provided. The children have the use of an outdoor play area at the rear of the building.

Staffing

At the time of the inspection, there were 12 adults attached to the early years service, of whom 10 worked directly with the children, including 4 Community Employment (CE) participants. The registered provider was not service based. A fifth CE participant carried out kitchen duties. In addition, there were two students undertaking work placements.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, deputy, 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) The registered provider had ensured that a person in charge and a deputy were assigned to the service. This information was displayed in the main entrance area.
 - (b) The deputy was working at the setting when the unannounced inspection commenced. The person in charge arrived within five minutes and remained to facilitate the remainder of the inspection process. The staff roster indicated that the service was consistently operated with either the person in charge or the deputy present.
 - (c) Information regarding the service's management structure was available and clearly set out the names and roles of each staff member attached to the service.
- (2) A total of eight files were reviewed. Five of these files related to adults who had joined the service on a Community Employment (C.E.) scheme since the previous inspection. Two of the files related to students and one of the files had not been assessed at the previous inspection.
- (a) Five of the 16 required written and validated references on file were from past employers.
 - (b) Eleven of the 16 references had been provided by sources other than previous employers and had been validated.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 12 staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Garda vetting was also available for one of the students. The second student was under the age of 18 and did not require Garda vetting.
 - (d) Police vetting was required and available for five of the adults who worked at the service and had access to children.
- (4) Not applicable, as qualifications were not required in respect of the registered provider, CE participants, or the students.

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) Throughout the period of inspection, an adequate number of adults were observed to work directly with the children in attendance.

(2) At the time of inspection, the adult to child ratios met the minimum requirement of the regulation:

- In the morning, there were 4 staff working directly with 17 children, who were aged 1 to 3 years.
- Seventeen children, aged 1 to 3 years, were also present in the afternoon, with 4 adults available.

In addition, the person in charge was on site. The CE participants and the students were not included in the adult child ratios.

(8)

(a) At least two staff were present at all times throughout the inspection period. This practice was also evidenced through review of the staff roster.

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) The person in charge advised that a total of 25 children were enrolled at the service. A sample of 12 child record forms was assessed. Each form included all of the information, as listed from (a) to (i), which met the requirement.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*

(f) the opening hours and fees;

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

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was maintained of the following information:

(a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee.

(b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services.

(c) Details of the adult:child ratios in each care room.

(f) The opening hours and fees for the service were clearly outlined.

(i) The staff roster was well laid out and clearly outlined that either the person in charge or the deputy was on the premises at all times. It also detailed which staff member was trained in first aid and ensured that one of those named persons was on the premises at all times. The roster stated each staff member's start, finish and break times throughout the day.

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)

Basic needs:

- Meals were provided at regular intervals. A mid-morning snack was observed from 9.45am in the care rooms and the children in the Baby room had a hot lunch at 11.45am. The person in charge advised that an afternoon snack was also offered from 2.30pm.
- A relaxed atmosphere was noted during mealtime routines, as the adults chatted to and assisted the children. Developmentally appropriate crockery and cutlery were provided for the children's use.
- Drinking water was available within the care rooms, both during and outside of the designated mealtimes.
- Children were assisted with self-care practices, such as cleaning their faces and hands.

- Cosy areas were accessible for any child that required time to rest and relax during the day.
- During discussion, the deputy advised that children who displayed signs of tiredness outside of the service's scheduled rest period, would be accommodated to sleep as needed.
- Nappy changing was carried out at designated intervals and staff confirmed that it was also ensured according to the children's needs. This care routine was sensitively managed and the adults were observed to chat warmly to the children.
- Minor disagreements among the children were calmly addressed by the adults, before such incidents escalated.
- The adults had the use of suitably sized seating, while comforting and caring for the children.
- Adequate space was available within the indoor environment for the children to freely explore, play and participate in daily tasks.

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 wash hand basins throughout the premises were provided with thermostatically controlled warm water. The water temperatures at the wash hand basins were recorded between 36.6°C and 42.9°C.
- Cleaning agents in the care rooms and the nappy changing area were observed to be stored on high-level shelves, out of the children's reach.
- Electrical flexes were stored out of reach of the children.
- Low-level doors were painted, to create visibility strips.
- Radiator covers were in place to reduce the risk of a child sustaining a burn injury.
- The cupboards were fitted with child proof locks.
- The low-level chairs in the Baby room were fitted with safety harnesses.

Infection control:

- In the nappy changing area, individually labelled storage was provided for the children's nappies, wipes and barrier creams.
- The nappy changing area was sanitised in between each nappy change.
- A laundry room was available on site to provide clean linen for sleep.

- Windows in both care rooms remained open throughout the day to promote natural ventilation.
- Play equipment, floors and surfaces appeared clean throughout the setting.
- Pedal operated bins were in use in each room.
- The adults' and children's sanitary areas were provided with mechanical ventilation, liquid soap, paper towels, warm running water and pedal bins.

Safe sleep:

- In the Toddler room, all of the children, who were aged over two years slept on stackable beds. The staff members were observed to remain in the room during the sleep period and the ratio was maintained throughout.
- In the Baby room, three children under the age of two were brought by a staff member into the sleep room, to sleep in standard cots. The staff member was observed to remain in the sleep room for the duration of the children's nap.
- On the day of inspection, a staff member physically checked each sleeping child every ten minutes and recorded their breathing, position and colour.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. In the Baby room, safe storage of chairs was not ensured. Six of the children's low level feeding chairs were stacked on top of each other, beside a wall. This posed a risk of injury to a child, should the stack topple over, or be pulled down. It was acknowledged that when this was brought to the attention of the person in charge, the chair stack was removed. However, later in the morning, while the children were eating lunch, it was observed that chairs were stored on top of a nearby table. There was a risk that these chairs could fall from the table or be pulled down, while the children were present in the care room.

Infection control:

The following increased the risk of cross infection:

2. During four observed nappy changing procedures, the following practices were noted in one or more of the changes, which were not in line with the service's nappy changing policy:
 - The child's or adult's hands were not washed after the nappy change.
 - A staff member touched the lid of the bin while wearing gloves and proceeded to continue with the nappy change with the same gloves in place.
 - The staff member redressed the child while still wearing the gloves.

- The staff member returned each child to the care room and came back with another child, while wearing the same gloves.
- 3. A distance of 50cm was not maintained between 2 of the cots. The space in between the cots was measured at 6cm.
- 4. One of the cots in use in the sleep room was not fitted with a waterproof mattress, or a waterproof mattress protector, as required to reduce the risk of cross infection.
- 5. The children's sofa in the Toddler room was torn, and the inner foam was protruding. This impeded effective cleaning.

Safe sleep:

- 6. During discussion, a staff member stated that some of the children who attended the Baby room slept on stackable beds. Subsequent to this, two children who attended this care room and were under the age of two, were observed to sleep on stackable beds. Tusla's Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months states that stackable beds are not suitable for use by children aged under 24 months, as they are not sufficiently conducive to sleep for children in this age range.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

- 1. The written response outlined that following the inspection, a staff meeting was held. All staff working in the service now ensure that baby chairs are not stacked high and are kept at a low-level at all times. No furniture will be placed on the tables at any time during the day. The risk that this poses to the children has been clearly outlined to all staff members. As a preventive measure, a sign has been made for the classrooms, stating that no chairs are to be placed on the tables at any time. A notice, clearly stating the maximum stacking height for baby chairs, has also been displayed.

Infection control:

- 2. To ensure infection control is adhered to at all times, a staff meeting was held to go through the correct process for hand washing and nappy changing. To prevent this from reoccurring, the policy on hand washing and nappy changing has been sent to all staff. Staff have also been asked to sign and return the policy, in order to ensure that they understand the importance of frequent handwashing.
- 3. In order to ensure that there is adequate space between the cots at sleep time, the service has developed a new sleep arrangement for the Wobbler room. The sleep room can fit three cots comfortably, allowing

50cm space between each cot. Two additional cots will be brought into the main care room and three floor beds will be used. All staff members will be notified of the new sleep arrangement and written information regarding the requirement for 50cm space between cots, will be clearly visible in the room.

4. A new waterproof mattress protector was purchased for the cot. As a preventive measure, all staff members do a daily check, to ensure that each cot has a waterproof mattress protector, before the cot is used.
5. The sofa in the Toddler room has been disposed of. To prevent this from reoccurring, management are now doing a weekly check of all furniture/soft play equipment, to ensure that it meets the required standards. All staff members have also been asked to inform management of any ripped or broken items.

Safe sleep:

6. To ensure that all safe sleep guidelines are met, the service has purchased four floor beds and all staff have been informed that no child under the age of two years old can sleep on a stackable bed. The safe sleep policy has also been amended to meet this regulation. As a preventive measure, all staff members were trained on Tusla's Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months. A printed copy of the safe sleep changes was posted in both rooms, for staff to familiarise themselves with and refer to, if needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Photographic evidence in relation to the relevant signage.

Infection control:

2. A copy of the service's handwashing policy and a copy of the nappy changing policy.
3. A photograph of the signage in relation to the 50cm spacing requirement.
4. A screen shot of the invoice for the waterproof mattress protector.
5. The statement submitted is accepted as evidence.

Safe sleep:

6. A screen shot of the invoice for the new floor beds.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) Current First Aid Responder (FAR) certification was available for two staff members and the staff roster indicated that at least one of these adults was on duty, while the service was in operation.

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.*

(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) Documentation in relation to completed monthly fire drills was presented for review. It was noted that the most recent fire drill was undertaken on 30 October 2025.
- (b) The number and type of firefighting equipment available were outlined in writing. Maintenance records demonstrated that the firefighting equipment was serviced in November 2024 and that the smoke alarm system was tested on 20 June 2025.

(4) The fire evacuation notice was clearly displayed in the entrance area.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (a) safe and secure*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

- (a)
- The main entrance door was maintained secure when not in use.
 - All internal doors were fitted with handles at adult height, to prevent children from exiting unsupervised. The doors to the care rooms were fitted with coded keypad locks, to prevent unauthorised persons from gaining access.
 - High-level fencing created a secure enclosure of the outdoor environment.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. A tap at one of the wash hand basins in the children's sanitary facility was not maintained in proper working order and required repair. There was no running water available.
 2. High water pressure was noted at one of the wash hand basins in the nappy changing facility. When the tap was turned on to test the water temperature, the force of the water caused it to spill out over the wash hand basin and onto the floor. The use of this tap therefore posed as a slip hazard.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d)
1. The written reply stated that the tap in the children's toilet facility has been fixed and now provides running water. In order to ensure that this does not happen again, management will ensure that any broken equipment will be attended to immediately.
 2. The broken tap at the staff wash hand basin has been fixed. The water pressure has been reduced and it is flowing as normal. To prevent this from reoccurring, all equipment will be fixed immediately by the service's plumber.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was provided in relation to both corrective actions.

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Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented has addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 29.