

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC255
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Name of Service:	Mallow Community Childcare
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Address of Service:	Ballyellis, Mallow, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P51 EH90
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Name of Registered Provider:	Christina Dunstan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	23/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Second Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	F Collins
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Mallow Community Childcare is a purpose-built childcare service. The premises is located at the rear of the Cork Education & Training Board, Further Education and Training Centre in Ballyellis, Mallow.

The service offers full day care, part time and sessional childcare and facilitates the Early Childhood Care and Education programme for 38 weeks of the year.

The centre is a community service and operates between the hours of 07.45-18.00 hours, Monday –Friday. The service caters for children aged four months to six years.

The premises is single story with onsite parking. The premises consists of a large foyer, four care rooms, with adjacent toilet and nappy changing facilities. The premises also contains a staff room, staff toilets, service kitchen, an office, parent room and storage facilities.

There is an outdoor play area accessible to each care room via the hallway and via the care room used by the babies. There are four separate outdoor spaces three of which are used on rotation by the older children and a dedicated outdoor space for the babies attending the Tiny Turtles room.

Staffing

The service employs 20 adults and there were 14 adults present on the day of inspection of which 11 were working directly with the children, inclusive of the deputy person in charge.

The additional staff present on the day of inspection were the kitchen staff and the person in charge.

Ten of the 11 staff working in the service providing care to pre-school children held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care & Education or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent. The remaining adult was a person on a community employment scheme.

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:

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- 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, person in charge and deputy person in charge, the staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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 service had a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection. In the event the person or deputy person in charge were not on the premises a named person able to deputise was available.*
- (b) The person in charge or one of the named deputies were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.*
- (c) There was a clear structure in the service that identified the management structure. Each care room had a room leader and childcare staff. The service was also facilitating two adults on community employment schemes.*

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(2)

Twenty adults work in the service; six staff files were reviewed completely as they had commenced in the pre-school service since the last inspection. In addition to these three staff files were assessed for up-to-date Garda Vetting for the named staff.

(a) Of the twelve references required seven validated references were available from past employers.

(b) Of the twelve references required three validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were on file for all six new adults employed in the pre-school service and for the three staff who required their Garda Vetting to be renewed. The service also adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff.

(d) Of the six staff whose full staff files were assessed five staff members required police vetting and this was available on file and translated.

(4) Of the six staff files assessed three staff members required a qualification in early childhood care and education and all three had a qualification available on file and available for assessment.

Non-Compliance Information

(9)

(2) (b) Two references on file for one adult working in the service were not validated. Not appropriately validating references may allow for adults that are inappropriate having access to children.

(3) The procedures as set out above had not been completed prior to staff commencing in the service and having access to children as references were not validated prior to an adult commencing in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(9)

(2) (b) Both references have been validated and added to the staff file. A checklist document has been added to the files to ensure all requirements are completed prior to commencing in the service.

(3) The vetting procedures will be completed prior to commencing in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) (b) Two validations have been received, the checklist for assessing staff files has been received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met.

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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 following policies were assessed:

- The infection control policy and in particular the nappy changing procedure was reviewed to assess if the procedure was in keeping with best practice, the procedure was satisfactory.
- The policy on the administration of medication. This policy was in keeping with best practice.

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) All four care rooms were in operation on the day of inspection. There were adequate staff available to meet the needs of the children in all care rooms.
- (2) The adult child ratios within the service were adequate.
- The Tiny Turtles (babies) room had one adult working with three children. Two of these children were under the age of 1 year and one of the children was aged between 1-2 years.
 - Little Lambs (wobblers): This room had nine children attending throughout the day. The children were aged 1-2 years, and they were being cared for by two adults. A further adult on a community employment scheme was also working in this care room.
 - Busy Bees: This room had 16 children attending aged between 3-5 years in the morning and were being cared for by 2-3 adults. There were 10 children attending this room in the afternoon.

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- Cool Cats: This room had 15 children aged 2-3 years attending in the morning being cared for by 3 adults. In the afternoon there were 10 children attending and were cared for by 2 adults.

Break cover was managed by the staff and the deputy person in charge and ensured the adult child ratios were maintained.

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) (a) –(i) Twelve of the children's records were reviewed across the four care rooms, all twelve records were completed with all of the information as outlined above detailed and available for staff should the need arise.

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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:

- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1) (j) Nine records where medication had been administered in the service were reviewed, parent request and acknowledgement of administration of the medication were recorded. Staff signatures when medication was administered and details of the medication was completed on all nine records.
- (k) Fifteen accident and incident records were reviewed across the four care rooms, all were completed with the requisite details of parents and staff signatures, details of the incident and of the care given to children following the incident.

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 Tiny Turtles (Baby) room was comfortable and heated to 21.5°C at 09.50, this was warm enough for the children to play in comfort. The remaining rooms were also suitably heated ranging from 20.8 -21.3°C.
- The children's needs around food and drink were met. Meals and snacks were provided by the service providing fruit, water and vegetarian pasta with cheese for dinner. All children in the service ate the same meal. The children were observed to eat their snacks and meals at appropriate times.
- The children's needs for a rest and sleep was provided as needed in the Tiny Turtles room with the children having access to their cots when they indicated the need for sleep. The children in the Cool Cats and Little

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Lambs rooms had beds set up after dinner, in addition to this there were cots available in the sleep room adjacent to the Little Lambs room and the children all slept at the same time. Staff remained in the care room while the children were sleeping.

- Rest areas were provided in all care rooms. With the children observed to relax and also play in these areas.
- The children were observed to freely move about in their playroom. The staff were observed to encourage the children to get involved in group play but allowed to play in small groups or alone if they wished.

Supporting Relationships

- The staff were observed sit with the children at mealtimes, at tabletop activities and during free play. The staff assisted but allowed the children to play with their peers as they wished.
- The staff worked well in teams and were aware of their room team and where they could get support if required.
- The staff were observed to talk with parents at drop off and collection and this communication was supported by the care application system used by the service to inform parents of activities or any issues that occurred such as an accident or incident or the giving of medication.
- The staff supported the children to be independent and allowed them to choose their own activity and to seek support as required.
- The staff were observed to speak to the children in a respectful manner. The staff knew each child by their name and got down to the child's eye level when interacting with each child individually or in groups. The staff in the Tiny Turtles sat on the floor playing with the children at their level and supported them to move from one area to the next.

Physical And Material Environment

- Each of the four care rooms had a variety of toys and resources suitable for the ages of the children attending each of the individual care rooms. The resources were specific to encourage the development of each child, i.e. jigsaws and blocks and bricks for fine motor development, moulding clay for sensory play, home corners for imaginary play and storytelling for cognitive and speech development.
- Dress up clothes were accessible in some of the care rooms to support imaginary play.
- All shelving was accessible to the children, and they were able to choose their activities as required in each of the care rooms.
- There were suitable adult chairs available to the adults to be comfortable while caring for the children.

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OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT

There were four individual spaces in the outdoors. Three of the areas were for the use of the children attending the Little Lambs, Cool Cats and Busy Bees, each group used a different area which changed weekly. The babies' outdoor space was theirs alone and was set up for the age of child that was attending the baby room.

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 external doors were secured with electromagnetic locks and this prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised and also prevented unauthorised access to the service by unknown adults.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- The internal doors were appropriately secured and prevented children accessing unsafe areas.
- The windows were not accessible to the children and there were no low-level windows which the children could walk into.
- The outdoor space was secured with fencing, and a risk assessment was carried out daily on this space.
- No concerns were observed with window blind cords.
- The electrical flexes and cables observed appeared to be in good condition.
- The cleaning agents were stored on high shelves/baskets and were inaccessible to the children.
- The waste was inaccessible in pedal operated lidded bins.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands before snack time, after using the toilet or having their nappies changed and after coming in from outdoor play.
- Nappies and paper waste were disposed in the appropriate pedal operated bins.
- The tables were cleaned with appropriate surface sanitiser prior to the children eating their meals.
- The cots were individually assigned and had linen changed on a schedule.
- The older children who were sleeping on floor beds had individual sheets and blankets assigned.

Administration of Medication:

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- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection and records completed indicated good practice in the administration of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were monitored while sleeping, 10 minutes sleep checks were completed on the children sleeping in the cot room adjacent to the Tiny Turtles room, and these checks were recorded on the care application system.
- The sleep room temperature recorded at 09.50 in the sleep room where a child under the age of one year was sleeping was 17.9°C. The staff member was aware of the requirements around safe sleep for the children.
- In the Busy Bees and Little Cool Cats rooms the staff remained in the care room while the children were sleeping on stackable beds and in cots.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exit doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection. No bed was placed near a fire door when the rooms were set up for sleep time.
- Firefighting equipment inclusive fire extinguishers were safely tethered to the wall and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- The staff member responsible for changing nappies on the morning of inspection was observed not to wash her hands between each different child. The gloves and aprons were changed and children's hands were washed but hand washing had not been completed by the staff member. This allowed for the potential of cross contamination and the spread of infection between the staff and children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- The nappy changing procedure was reissued to the staff of the service. The staff member responsible for changing nappies has completed training on hand washing. Management have followed up with all staff regarding nappy changing.

Supporting documentation submitted

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Infection Control:

1. The assurances received on the corrective and preventive actions has been accepted as proof. The nappy changing procedure has been received.

Summary Comment

Then requirement for this regulation has been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was insured to operate as a full day care service with 54 children allowed to attend at any one time.
The expiry date for the insurance was 27.03.2027.