

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE014
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Name of Service:	Burren Sonas
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Address of Service:	Main Street, Kilfenora, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 WOHA
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Name of Registered Provider:	Christopher O' Keeffe
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Tusla, Station Road Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ní Nialláin
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

The Burren Sonas first opened in 2003 as a sessional Early Years Service. The service operated from its current location since 2014. The service caters for up to a maximum number of 22 pre-school children, between the ages of 2 and 6 years. The service is open Monday-Fridays 09.30 hours - 13.00 hours. The service operates under the governing organisation Burren Sonas Group Ltd. The premises are located in the rural village of Kilfenora in the north of County Clare. It consists of a commercial unit converted to a childcare facility. This building is a two storey structure with childcare provided in one playroom on the ground floor which has its own access at the side of the building. The outdoor play area is located off the premises within a few hundred metres of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider is not involved in the day to day running of the service.

A designated service manager operates the sessional service assisted by one childcare staff member. The service manager was present on the day when the unannounced inspection was carried out.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,15, 19,23, 25,26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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.

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 service manager, staff member 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) On the day of the inspection, the service manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.
- (b) During the period of the inspection, the designated person in charge was present on the premises. The staff roster indicated that the designated person and her deputy were always available in the service.
- (2)(a) Three references from past employers were available for two staff members.
- (b) Where past employer references were not available, one reference from a source other than a past employer was available.
- (c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for two adults.
- (d) Police vetting was available for the two adults who had lived outside the state for a period greater than six months.
- (4) The two adults working directly with children in the service held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of Inspection there were two adults working with ten pre-school children. The adult/child ratio in the service was correct.
- (3) The staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.
- (8)(c) Not applicable as the service was not operated single-handedly, two adults were available in the service

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.

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

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and
- (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The records of the thirteen children registered to attend the service were inspected. The service maintained an adequate record for each child attending the service, in accordance with Regulation 15(1) (a) to (i).
- (3)(a) Parents/guardians had access to all information and written records relating to their own child.
- (b) Records were available to the authorised person in the service.
- (c) Records were open and available for inspection to the Tusla Early Years Inspector.

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:

- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service. The parents supplied a variety of fresh fruit for the snack. The service supplied freshly baked brown bread, herbal tea and homemade vegetable soup made in advance by the adults. Drinks of water were available throughout the session.
- Children could access the toilet at any time and were supervised if required.
- Personal cleanliness and hand washing was encouraged and supervised.
- Children had opportunities to move about freely in the playroom and in the outdoor play area.
- The adults were positive and consistent in their approach to managing children's behaviour.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The indoor environment was comfortable, welcoming and safe and provided a good range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children.
- Play equipment and materials were mostly made of natural materials and were grouped to provide specific interest areas and appealing places for children to play and explore. Some of these included a home corner, a library area, a dress-up area, jig-saw area and an arts and crafts area. A variety of materials for junk play, puppets, construction toys, musical instruments and multi-cultural dolls were available.
- A large quantity of the children's play equipment and toy accessories were made from wood which included train sets on tracks, construction blocks, animals, a fire station and fire engines, play houses, furniture, figurines, kitchen units, cooking utensils and various props for pretend play.
- The playroom was carefully arranged and decorated with fresh flowers and other botanical items. The play materials and equipment were freely available and accessible to the children on low level open shelving.
- An outdoor play area was provided in an adjoining property adjacent to the pre-school. The outdoor environment was used to promote children's health, development and wellbeing as children could engage in energetic play activities. The equipment available outdoors included sand play, climbing opportunities and free running space in the garden.

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 person in charge ensured that complete and accurate daily records of attendance were kept for all children and adults. The entrance to the service was secured and no hazards were identified in the playroom.

Infection Control:

The playroom and sanitary areas were adequately ventilated by natural forms of ventilation.

There was liquid soap at the wash hand basins to facilitate hygienic hand washing for children and adults.

Individual cloth towels were provided in the sanitary area used by the children and adults to facilitate hygienic hand drying.

Administration of Medication:

Appropriate documentation was available in the event that medication was required by a child attending the service. Medication was not administered in the service on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service.

Outing:

Operational procedures were in place for the safe conduct of outings.

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) One adult held a First Aid Responder certificate which were valid to the June 2025. The second adult had a Paediatric First Aid cert which was valid to September 2025
- (2)(a) There was a fully equipped first aid box stored in a designated first aid storage area which was easily accessible.
- (b) The first aid box was available to the children always attending the pre-school service.

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) Records are available to show that fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises with the most recent services having been completed in August and September 2023.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in a conspicuous position on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate for the service was available and was valid to 27th March 2024. The required cover was available for a maximum of 22 pre-school children who could attend at any one time.