

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CE014
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Burren Sonas
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Main Street, Kilfenora, Co. Clare
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<b>Eircode:</b>	V95 W0HA
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Christopher O'Keeffe
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	10/10/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	8	PM	0
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Quality and Regulation Directorate, Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	J Hayes
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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<b>Authority to Inspect</b>	
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).	

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

Burren Sonas first opened in 2003 as a sessional Early Years Service. The service operates from its current location since 2014. The service facilitates a Steiner educational and care approach within the indoor and outdoor environment and 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 service is located in the rural village of Kilfenora in north Clare. It consists of a commercial unit converted to a childcare facility which has its own access at the side of the building. This building is a two-storey structure with childcare provided in one large playroom and an additional smaller room on the ground floor. 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. There are four adults employed by the service.

A designated service manager operates the sessional service assisted by one childcare staff member. The service manager and the childcare staff member were present on the 10 October 2025 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 and safety. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (3)

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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 person in charge, 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)

On the 10 October 2025 a designated person in charge and a person available to deputise were available as required.

(b)

Both the designated person in charge and the deputy were available on the premises at all times.

Five files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adults employed by the service. These files were reviewed, and the following was noted:

(2)(a)

Ten written and validated references from past employers were available.

(b)

Four written and validated references were obtained from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

Garda Vetting disclosures were available in respect of the five adults in the service. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was available in respect of two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

The registered provider and five adults working directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education ranging from level 5 to 6 or an equivalent on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

International police vetting was not available in respect of one adult who had resided outside the state for a period longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The relevant police vetting disclosure has been applied for and when received it will be reviewed and filed in the staff folder. The adult will not be left unsupervised with the children until the police clearance has been received. A staff compliance checklist has been put in place to ensure all future employees provide required vetting before commencing unsupervised duties.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Evidence of the application process for the police clearance was submitted.

### Summary Comment

Evidence of an application for International Police Vetting for one adult was reviewed however; a copy of the completed International Police vetting has not been submitted to the inspector to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt. The noncompliance in relation to regulation 9(2)(d) remains outstanding.

### 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)  
An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children who attended the service.
- (3)  
The minimum required ratio of adults cared for the children at all times during the inspection. On the 10 October 2025 two adults cared for eight children attending the sessional service.

### 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)  
The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the indoor and outdoor environment through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials, and equipment, having regard to the age and level of development of the children. Two rooms were in operation during the inspection.

### Basic Needs of the Children:

The atmosphere in the service was calm and relaxed. A child centred approach was evident during all interactions and activities. The adults were observed to be respectful, gentle and kind towards the children in their care. Each child was listened to and given time to converse and express their thoughts and feelings. The children freely explored their environment and guided their own activities whilst being supported when required by the adults. The adults were very attentive to the children's needs and the children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner. The children's social and domestic skills were supported as they assisted with preparing the table at mealtime. The tables were laid out with crockery and the children could readily identify their place at the table using visual aids. One child was responsible for handing out the cutlery and children were encouraged to support each other at mealtime. The children and adults sat together during mealtime and this period was observed to be relaxed and calm. The children were offered cooked pasta with grated cheese and additional portions were available on request.

The indoor and outdoor environments provided a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for the children which promoted choice, self-directed, imaginary play and learning. The play materials and equipment included naturally sourced materials and equipment and most of the supporting materials were created by the adults working in the service. A quiet sensory room was available for children to move to when they required some time out from the main group. The outdoor play area was spacious with a grass surface, and children wore appropriate footwear and all-weather clothing while playing in this area. This included a natural environment and a greenhouse structure that had various interest areas which catered for and promoted challenging play and learning for the children.

### 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 internal and external entrances to the service was appropriately secured to monitor people's entry to the service. The internal and external entry and exit points prevented children exiting or unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- The materials and equipment throughout the service were maintained in good condition.
- Storage areas were secured to prevent the children accessing the contents within

## Infection Control:

- The indoor and outdoor environments were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Cleaning schedules were in place throughout the premises.
- The sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped to promote good hand hygiene practices.
- Both the children and the adults washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, toileting and before mealtime. Photographic illustrations of hand hygiene techniques were displayed to prompt children to wash their hands.

## Administration of Medication:

- The person in charge confirmed that medication is not routinely administered.
- A policy and supporting documentation were available for staff to use in the event that medicine is required.

## Fire Safety:

- The fire exit doors and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exit routes, and fire assembly points were readily identified with clear signage.

## Outing:

- A service policy was available to inform practice for outings with risk assessments and safety guidelines in place. The adults demonstrated knowledge of the contents of the policy and the actions to be taken to maintain the safety of children.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

### Compliance Information

Evidence of current insurance cover was available for twenty-two children attending the service on a sessional basis. The insurance policy for the sessional service is valid until the 27 March 2026.