

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE058
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Name of Service:	Inagh Ark Childcare
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Address of Service:	Inagh, Ennis, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 YH29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niall Garvey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	44
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare.
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy & J. Hayes
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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Inagh Ark Childcare is located in single storey purpose built childcare facility in a rural area, outside Ennis, County Clare. The service facilitates full day, part-time and sessional care for children. A play-based programme of care and education is facilitated for children ranging in age from six months to six years Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00.

The four care rooms accommodated the following age range of children: playful pandas room (age range: fourteen months to sixteen months), busy bees room (age range: one to two years), terrific turtles room (age range: two to three years) and the mighty monkeys room (age range: three to four years). Two designated sleep rooms are available for children to sleep. An outdoor play area is located to the rear and side of the building and the service has access to a large community hall and a playground nearby.

Staffing

Nineteen adults are employed by the service. The registered provider is part of the board of management and does not work in the service. On the 18 February 2025 the service manager, the assistant manager and eleven adults who worked directly with the children, a student on work placement, and two auxiliary persons who clean, reheat and serve the food were present.

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) (8)(a)

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

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 - First aid (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, assistant manager, 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 manager was the person in charge and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The manager and the assistant manager were available during the inspection.

(2)

Twenty-one files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

- (a)
Thirty-four written and validated references from past employers in respect of adults working in the service were available.
- (b)
Eight written and validated references were available in respect of adults working in the service from a source other than a past employer.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the adults employed by the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)
International police vetting was available in respect of four adults working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months.
- (4)
The adults working directly with the preschool children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)
During the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.
- (2)
On the 18 February 2025 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Eleven adults cared for the fifty-one children in attendance in the morning and nine adults cared for forty-four children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a)
During the inspection more than two adults were available in the service at all times.

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 within the service through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials, and equipment having regard to the age and developmental stage of the children. Four care rooms were in operation during the inspection.

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a respectful manner and positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions. The adults praised and encouraged the children, conversed with the children at their level, used soft tones of voice, responded promptly to their cues for assistance and comfort. The children were encouraged to be independent in play and learning, whilst caring for their belongings, at mealtime and whilst using the toilet. The adults supervised and treated the children in a respectful manner during nappy changes and toileting. Nappies were changed frequently and on an individual need's basis. The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care and prompted to wipe their noses at appropriate intervals.

The children's sleep was attended to on an individual basis and an alternative area and activities were offered for children who did not wish to sleep. The infants were encouraged to feed themselves and promoted to be independent. Appropriate crockery and feeding utensils were provided in each room. Mealtime was observed to be relaxed and sociable occasion. Parents provided healthy and nutritious food for the children. The food is reheated and served by the cook in each room. Drinks of water were freely available to children throughout the day in each room. The adults supported the children's choice of individual and group engagement in activities. The children in each room were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and learning activities. The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor area for play based activities and transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor area. Children's care and daily learnings were communicated with the parents/guardians in a positive manner as they collected their children from the playrooms.

Physical and Material Environment:

The care rooms were bright, spacious and well-resourced and were laid out to enable the children to freely access the equipment and materials. Throughout each room of the service the physical layout was designed to be stimulating, challenging and interesting for children. The rooms accommodating the younger children had lots of soft floor coverings to facilitate floor play activities such as crawling, rolling and sitting. Throughout the day, the children were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and educational activities and observed to be fully engaged as they transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environments. Learning aids and the children's individual artwork were displayed on the walls in each care room. A variety of opportunities for play and learning activities were available and accessible in the indoor and outdoor environments with defined areas of interest. The care rooms were appropriately resourced with home and shop corners, art stations, sensory areas, pretend play wooden houses, wooden activity units and dress up areas. Seating with soft furnishings and mats with adjacent reading materials were used by the children to rest and relax. Low level shelving units were accessible to the children with a range of manipulative, sensory, imaginative and constructive toys and learning materials for the age and level of development of the children.

The outdoor play area located to the side and rear of the service was accessible from three of the four preschool rooms. The play area was enclosed and had been recently resurfaced with an all-weather synthetic material and a partially covered section was available to support play in all weather conditions. The children wore all weather clothing and footwear and had access to an activity unit, a pretend playhouse, wall mounted games, water play

stations, sensory play tables, a slide, a climbing frame, and a range of rocking toys, ride on vehicles and bicycles were available. The children were observed to thoroughly enjoy their time in the indoor and outdoor environments.

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:

- A key coded, bell operated system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility. Unauthorised persons are recorded in the visitors' book.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within.
- The children were signed in and out on arrival and departure to the service on the childcare electronic application system.
- Storage facilities were secured and inaccessible to the children.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured to the windows throughout the service.
- The highchairs were maintained in adequate condition with fitted safety harnesses.
- Evidence of completed risk assessments were available demonstrating measures taken by the registered provider to maintain the service.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Completed cleaning schedules were available demonstrating measures taken by staff to clean and maintain the service.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins. A nappy changing area was available, and a nappy changing procedure was clearly displayed on the wall close to the change mats.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, using the toilet and outdoor play and before mealtime.
- The children's perishable food items were stored in a refrigerator in each care room and the kitchen.
- The children's personal belongings, toiletries and bedlinen were stored in individual and clearly labelled containers.

- The soothers were stored in individually labelled containers and an adequate method was available for sterilising equipment.

Administration of Medication:

- The adults demonstrated an awareness of the service's administration of medication policy and procedure.
- Documentation was available for the adults to record medication administered to the children in attendance.

Safe Sleep:

- The adults demonstrated an awareness of the service's safe sleep policy.
- The children's sleep observations were recorded by the adults every ten minutes on written and electronic records. These observations included the children's colour, position and breathing.
- The sleep rooms accommodated standard sized cots with wipeable mattresses for the children to sleep. Low level beds with individual blankets and bedlinen were available for the children who required sleep.
- An electronic thermometer was available for the adults to measure and monitor the room temperatures.

Fire Safety:

- The adults had evidence on file of up-to-date fire safety training.
- The fire exit routes and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exits routes and fire assembly points were readily identified with signage. A fire action notice was displayed at all the fire exit points in the building.
- The service demonstrated evidence of completing monthly fire drills to prepare the service to respond in the event of fire.

Outing:

- The registered provider stated that outings are not undertaken by the childcare facility.

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)
Five adults working in the service had a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The staff roster indicated that an adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available in the service at all times.

(2)(a)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored in the corridor outside two of the care rooms. The adults working in the service were familiar with the location of the first aid boxes.

(b)
The first aid boxes were available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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 fire fighting 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 were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 06 February 2025.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system took place respectively on the 28 February 2024 and on the 25 April 2024.

(4)

Fire action notices were displayed demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for the childcare facility. The insurance policy for the childcare facility and community buildings is valid until the 15 November 2025.