

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE092
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Name of Service:	Cairde Early Learning Centre
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Address of Service:	Inis Clair, Kildysart Road, Clarecastle, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 TXN3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Noreen Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	30
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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

Cairde Early Learning Centre is located in a residential area on the outskirts of the village of Clarecastle, in County Clare. The service was established in 2006 and changed ownership to the current owner in 2018. A programme of care is provided Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 17:30 on a full day care basis for children ranging in age from one to six years.

The single storey childcare facility consists of three care rooms, an office, a kitchen and sanitary facilities. The care rooms included the Toddler (Under the Sea) room (age range 2-3 years), a Toddler (Garden) room (age range 2-3 years), and a Pre-school (Space) room (age range 2-5 years). An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the side of the building.

Staffing

Eight adults are employed by the service. On the 25 February 2026 the manager and five adults worked directly with the children in attendance. The registered provider and area manager do not work directly with the children and were not present during the inspection. The manager provides an administrative role, relief cover in the care rooms and prepares, cooks and serves the food in the care rooms.

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 and premises and facilities. The regulations inspected included:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (3)(8)(a)

Regulation 16 (1) (i) (k)

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

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 (1)(2)(a)(b)

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

Regulation 28-Insurance

Regulation 29 – Premises (e)

Regulation 30- Minimum space requirements (2).

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 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,

(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)

On the 25 February 2026 the manager was available, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The manager was available during the inspection.

(2)
Eight files were available in respect of the registered provider, the area manager, the service manager and the five adults currently working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)
Twelve written references from past employers were available. Five of the twelve references were validated.

(b)
Two written references from a source other than a past employer were available. One of the two references was validated.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eight adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes in relation to one adult as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)
International police vetting was available in respect of seven adults working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.

(4)
The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)
The registered provider did not ensure that the following recruitment procedures were completed prior to the adults commencing in the service in accordance with the service's recruitment policy:

1. Two references with evidence of validation were not available in respect of two adults working in the service.
2. Eight written references were not validated in respect of adults working in the service.

A non-compliance under Regulation 9 (2)(a)(b) was found on last inspection 15 April 2025.

(3)

Six adults were appointed and allowed access to the children attending the pre-school service prior to the required references being available and assessed by the service. Not appropriately vetting adults prior to being assigned or allowed access to or contact with children, could impact the health and safety of children in their care.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) (3)

The references are now on file, and both validated for these two staff members.

The eight references have also been validated since.

Evidence of all of the above has been sent to the inspectorate.

A check list has been put in place to ensure validations have all been completed prior to commencing in the service.

The manager has also since been trained on this procedure.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(a)(b)

Copy of the required validated references.

Copy of the validation forms for the eight references.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and evidence provided by the registered provider the areas of non-compliance under Regulation 9 (2)(a)(b) (3) are addressed. The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 25 February 2026 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Six adults cared for the thirty children in attendance.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs of Children:

The children's learning, development, and well-being was supported by the adults. The adults in the care rooms interacted with the children in a kind and caring manner. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions with the children. The adults responded promptly to the children's cues for assistance and comfort, conversed at their level and listened attentively during conversations. The adults demonstrated an understanding of the children's individual preferences, personal interests and capabilities. The transitions in the changes of activities and environments in each room were facilitated with ease. The adults notified the children in advance of any change in the programme of activities. The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environment throughout the day. The children initiated open ended child-led play-based activities.

The older children were encouraged to be independent while caring for their personal belongings, using the toilet, participation in tasks and tidy up time. The children's cues for sleep were responded to in a prompt and calm manner during the designated sleep period. The children engaged in open ended creative, pretend and sensory play and dance. Speech sounds and language development was promoted by the adults through repetition, songs and rhymes. Mealtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable period. Food provided by the service on the day included chicken curry and rice for dinner with a selection of fruit for morning snack and afternoon snacks consisting of fruit, sandwiches, bread sticks or yoghurts provided by children's parents/guardians. Drinks of water were freely available to the children in the three care rooms. The younger children were encouraged to feed themselves and were promoted to be independent. Suitable age-appropriate crockery and feeding utensils were provided during mealtime.

Physical and Material Environment:

The three care rooms were bright, colourful and individually designed in accordance with themes: the space room, the under the sea room and the garden room. The rooms were appropriately furnished with low level tables, chairs and shelving accessible to the children. Designated areas to include wooden pretend play kitchens, art stations, construction areas were resourced and accessible to the children with a range of supporting materials and equipment. The low-level shelving unit containers stored a range of challenging opportunities for the children. Designated areas with soft furnishings to include couches, cushions, mats and shelving with reading materials were used by the children to rest and relax. The care rooms were child friendly with visual displays of the children's individual artwork, personal interests, multicultural displays, and family and birthday displays. Individual learning journals were available demonstrating the activities that the children had engaged in during the preschool year.

The outdoor area was enclosed with a wall and gate and had a synthetic soft mat surface. A covered section provided a sheltered area for play in all weather conditions. The outdoor area was resourced with a range of challenging and developmentally appropriate materials and equipment. The outdoor play equipment included a playhouse, mud kitchen and tuff tables for sensory and imaginative play. The children were observed to enjoy using the ride on toys, balance bikes, a wheelbarrow and a range of vehicles, a climbing frame with a mirror and slide and the building blocks. The children thoroughly enjoyed their time outdoors and were offered choice of engaging in a group activity that was very well facilitated by the adults or engaging in self-directed play.

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:

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

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (i)
- A staff roster was available and demonstrated the rostered hours for the adults working in the service.
- (k)
- Accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children attending the service were reviewed for 2026 in the record book. The records reviewed were completed in full and detailed a parental signature after the accident occurred.

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, with a high-level exit switch and video surveillance system were in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the service.
- The outdoor area was secured and enclosed with a surrounding perimeter wall and gate to protect the children within.
- The children were signed in and out on arrival to and departure from the service on the childcare electronic application system and supervised at all times during the inspection.
- Storage facilities were secured and inaccessible to the children.
- Medication was stored in a secure cabinet out of reach of the children.
- A daily risk assessment was available demonstrating measures taken to manage risk within the service.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean condition.
- The children's and adult's sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined and pedal operated bins.
- Both the children and the adults washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, after using the toilet and before mealtime.
- Perishable food items and beverages were stored in the refrigerators in the care rooms and the kitchen.
- The children's bedlinen and personal care items were labelled and stored individually.
- Soothers were stored in individually labelled containers.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered during the inspection.
- The manager demonstrated an awareness of the service's administration of medication procedure.
- Documentation was available should medication be administered to a child attending the service.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were placed to sleep in the Toddler (Under the Sea) room on low-level beds.
- The children's sleep observations were completed every 10 minutes by the adults who remained in the room. The observations recorded included the children's position, colour and breathing.
- The sleep room temperatures were maintained between 18 to 22 °Celsius. A thermometer was available for the adults to measure and monitor the temperatures.
- An area was available in each room with soft furnishings for the children to rest and relax when required.

Fire Safety:

- Records of completed monthly fire drills are available in the service.
- The fire exits and routes were clear from obstruction throughout the service.
- The fire assembly point and the fire exit route signage were readily identifiable and known to the adults working in the service.

Outing:

- The manager confirmed outings are undertaken by the service. Completed outings checklists and risk assessments were available in the service. An outings policy was available to inform parents/guardians of the service procedure.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for eight adults employed by the service. However, one garda vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Garda Vetting has been applied for in respect of the adult. Garda Vetting will always be updated a few months prior to the expiry date to ensure this does not occur in future.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. A copy of the garda vetting application and confirmation from the vetting unit.

Summary Comment

Evidence of an application for one adult's Garda vetting renewal was reviewed however a copy of the complete Garda vetting disclosure has not been submitted for this adult to the Early Years Inspectorate to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt.

The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in the service. The adults working in the service were familiar with the location of the first aid box in the office.

(b)

The first aid box was available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

On the 25 February 2026 an adult who held First Aid Responder (FAR) training was not available between 08:00 and 08:30. The staff roster indicated that an adult with up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training was not available at all times during operational hours of the service. It is acknowledged that five adults held a record of Basic First Aid for Children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)

One adult has since completed the FAR training course. Currently both the manager and the deputy manager have valid FAR certification. This has been reflected on the roster.

Two staff will be available at all times to ensure that staff with FAR training will be on the premises at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of the Staff Roster.

Copy of up to date FAR training Certification.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence provided by the registered provider the areas of non-compliance are addressed under Regulation 25 (1). The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 10 February 2026.

(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 20 November 2025 and 18 November 2025.

(4)

A fire action notice was 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 forty-five pre-school children attending the childcare service. The insurance policy for the sessional service is valid until the 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

(e)
The children had access to sanitary facilities adjacent to the Toddler rooms. The sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped with three child sized toilets and three wash hand basins. The nappy changing facility was equipped with a nappy changing mat, and nappy changing procedures were displayed. A sanitary facility was available for use by the adults.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(2)
On the 25 February 2025 adequate clear floor space was provided for the children attending the Toddler (Under the Sea) room and the Toddler (Garden) room. The Toddler (Under the Sea) room measured 22.81 m² and the Toddler (Garden) room measured 23.5 m².

Non-Compliance Information

(2)
On the 25 February 2026 adequate space was not provided for the children in attendance in the Pre-school (Space) room. The following table illustrates non-compliance relating to space requirements:

Room Name:	Number of Children and Age Range:	Type of Service Required:	Space Required Per Child	Space Available	Space Require
Pre-school Room	1 (2-3 Years) 19 (3-5 Years)	FDC	2.3 m 2.35 m	38.19 m ²	46m ²

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)
After the ECCE session four children have been transferred to the senior toddler room where age-appropriate equipment has been provided in the room for the children.
From June onwards the service will only be taking 17 ECCE Full Daycare and only 5 ECCE children.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)
No Evidence.

Summary Comment

The implemented measures outlined by the registered provider in the corrective and preventive actions should address the non-compliance under Regulation 30 (2). The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection