

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN016
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Name of Service:	Ciara's Home from Home
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Address of Service:	Glasscarrick, Loughduff, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	H12 NW83
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ciara Kiernan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	29/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	56	PM	42
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Common's Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	C Tunney, AM Cunningham
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

Ciara's Home from Home is a privately-owned full day care service in operation since 2014. The service is located both within and to the rear of the registered provider's family home which is located in a rural setting in Co. Cavan. The service is registered to operate from 8.00hrs to 17.30hrs each weekday, accommodating pre-school children on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis from birth up to 6 years of age and school aged children up to 12 years of age and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs.

There are 4 care rooms in operation, of these, the Baby room and the Toddler room are located in the basement level of the dwelling with direct access to this level reached from a sloped driveway and pathway leading around from the front around to the rear of the premises. An internal stair is also provided to facilitate adults to reach the staff office which is located on the next level up in the registered provider's home. The older pre-children and the school age children are accommodated in two separate detached buildings, namely Pre-school room 1 and Pre-school room 2, which are positioned to the rear of the premises. Three separate enclosed outdoor play areas are specifically allocated for the children attending the service.

Staffing

The registered provider and 12 adults are employed in the service including 1 staff member employed to work with the school aged children/cleaning duties and 1 staff member employed as a cook. The registered provider was working directly with the children during the inspection.

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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The four-pre-school rooms in operation were inspected, namely the Baby Room, Toddler Room, and two Pre-school Rooms. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation(s) 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. 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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection in respect of excessive water and surface radiator temperatures. The registered provider submitted a response to the IAN within 24 hours with photographic evidence which demonstrated normal water and radiator temperature readings. The response was accepted by the inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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
- (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.

(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 registered provider was the person-in-charge when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

The registered provider has two named persons who can deputise when required.

(b) Staff rosters and staff sign in records were available for inspection and indicated that the person-in-charge and/or the named persons who can deputise are on the premises during the hours of operation of the service.

(c) Staff members were aware of the management structure in the service, the lines of authority and accountability and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) Thirteen staff files were reviewed.

(a) Seventeen written past employer references were available and validated.

- (b) In the absence of past employer references, nine references from a source other than an employer were available and validated.
- (c) All staff files reviewed had the required garda vetting documents available for inspection.
- (d) Two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of more than six consecutive months had the required international police vetting available for inspection.
- (4) Eleven staff members providing direct care to pre-school children had documentation to show that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 9.40am and remained so throughout the inspection.
- The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity on the day of inspection:

- In the **Baby Room** there were 8 children aged 9 months to 2 years attending for full day care, being cared for by 3 staff members, of which 7 children attended for full day care.
- In the **Toddler Room** there were 12 children aged 2 years to 3 years, of which 10 children attended for full day care and 1 child attended for part time care, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the **Junior Pre-school Room** there were 18 pre-school children aged between 3 years to 5 years, of which 16 children attended for full day care, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the **Senior Pre-school Room** there were 18 pre-school children aged 3 years to 5 years, of whom 9 children were attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 2 adults.

(8)(a) Based upon a review of staff rosters and staff sign in records it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises 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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

Basic needs:

- The staff members were observed to be caring and attentive to the children and were responsive to the children's individual needs and preferences.
- A variety of fruit was served to the children in the Baby and Toddler Room for snack and the children in the Junior and Senior pre-school rooms brought their snacks from home which included sandwiches, cheese, yogurts. Staff members were observed chatting with the children during meals times with plenty of time allowed for the children to eat in a relaxed manner without rushing. Dinner was cooked on site and consisted of spaghetti bolognese for the older children and meat and a vegetable mixture with gravy which was served in an age-appropriate consistency for the younger children.

- The younger children were placed in highchairs. Children were encouraged to self-feed; assistance was given by staff members as required.
- The children's water bottles were readily available for the children to take from low level shelves in the care rooms during the day if they were thirsty and these were placed beside the children on their tables at snack and mealtimes.
- Nappy changing occurred regularly and in a timely manner and staff members were observed engaging in warm one to one interaction with the children when they were changing their nappies. The staff members were observed to be responsive to the children's cues that they needed to use the toilet providing assistance when necessary.
- Individual child-led sleep routines were facilitated in the Baby Room and all children who required sleep or showed signs of tiredness were promptly facilitated to sleep during the inspection. The older pre-school children who still availed of a day-time nap were facilitated to sleep on sleep mats set up on the floor of the Toddler Room and in the Junior Pre-school Room at the service's designated sleep time for these children after dinner.
- Children's behaviour was managed in an age-appropriate and positive manner with distraction, re-direction and problem-solving techniques used to good effect to prevent any minor problems from escalating.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children in all rooms on the day of the inspection and the children were dressed appropriately in their coats and hats before going outside as the weather was inclement.

Supporting Relationships around Children:

- The staff members were observed to engage in respectful and supportive interactions with the children in their care, using warm tones of voice and addressing the children by their name. The children were observed to interact comfortably with the staff members present and sought out staff for assistance and support when necessary. The staff members encouraged and supported the children in their play choices. The children in the Baby and Toddler Rooms were lifted and comforted as required. The children enjoyed a variety of activities including arts and crafts, playing outdoors, learning activities, free play and engaging in interactive singing with staff members which encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play, and movement. Staff were predictable and informed the children in advance of the next activity.

- The children and parents were greeted by the registered provider and staff members in a friendly and familiar way on their arrival to the service. A record of the child's daily activities was recorded for the younger children and shared daily with parents/ guardians.
- Positive teamwork was observed taking place during the inspection as evidenced in staff members regularly updating each other on the needs and preferences of children in their care.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was adequate furniture and play equipment available for the children on the day of inspection.

- The Baby Room contained play material such as a ball pool, activity centre, blocks, sensory bottles, sit on trucks and small play kitchen with support material. Play materials were visible and easily accessible to the children on open shelving at their height.
- The Toddler Room had a range of material including push along toys, a range of construction toys, arts and crafts, books, play kitchen with support material. These were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which promoted independence and facilitated choice.

- The two Pre-school Rooms were laid out in designated interest areas including a role play kitchen, which included support kitchen material, construction areas, small world areas, water/sand play, puzzles and arts and crafts areas. Play equipment encouraged imaginary play, conversation and interactive play.
- A range of books were available in the cozy reading areas which supported children’s language and development and children’s artwork was displayed on the walls in all rooms.

(b)

Adequate facilities for rest were available in the service for the number and age range of children attending. A separate sleep room was provided which adjoined the Baby room and contained 6 standard cots. All cots were observed to be in good condition. Sleep mats were available for children who availed of sleep in the Toddler room and Pre-school room 1. Within the four care rooms there were suitable rest areas with floor mats, cushions and soft toys provided, should a child need to rest or take a break from activities during the day.

(3) There were two fully enclosed outdoor play areas provided for the pre-school children attending the service. One enclosed area facilitated direct access from the Baby Room and designated for use by the children attending the Baby Room and the Toddler Room was mainly surfaced in concrete and contained a slide and a playhouse, and push along toys for the youngest children attending the service. A separate outdoor play area was located between Pre-School room 1 and Pre-School room 2 and contained a broad range of ride-on toys, a plastic playhouse, footballs, and children’s picnic benches.

Non-Compliance Information

Four of the six mattresses in the Sleep Room were not in good condition, such as three were stained and not clean and one was not firm, in variance to safe sleep guidance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- All four mattresses have been removed and replaced with new ones.

Preventive Action

- Mattresses will be checked regularly to make sure there are no stains on them.

Supporting documentation submitted

Receipt for the purchase of mattresses was submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. The registered provider has provided assurance that children's mattresses will be regularly checked to ensure they are maintained in a satisfactory condition. Documentation for the purchase of 4 mattresses was submitted and documentation to demonstrate that the mattresses are listed on a daily checklist was also submitted. Regulation 20 has been addressed.

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 gates and the entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Blind cords were appropriately secured.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service except as outlined below.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play and outdoor play.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition

Administration of Medication:

- The medication administration forms reviewed for children who had received medication in the service were accurately completed, demonstrating safe practice. The forms included signed parental consent and were also signed by the children's parent or guardian on collection to document that they were aware of when and what medication was administered to their child over the course of the day.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff members described safe sleep practices. Sleep checks were carried out and documented at 10 minutes intervals on all sleeping children, in both the baby and Toddler Rooms noting each child's position, colour and breathing pattern. Staff members remained in the Toddler Room during sleep time while children were resting on sleep mats.
- Adequate space was left between the cots in the sleep room and also between the sleep mats positioned in the Toddler Room and Junior Pre-school Room at the service's designated rest time after lunch.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Thermostatically controlled warm water was not available in the Junior Sanitary accommodation, the water temperature was excessive at 60°C and not maintained within the recommended maximum 43°C temperature. An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection in respect of excessive water temperature.
2. In the Junior Pre-school Room, the surface radiator temperature of both radiators was excessive at 62°C. and not maintained within the recommended maximum 50°C temperature. An immediate action notice was issued on the day of inspection in respect of excessive surface radiator temperatures.
3. In the Senior Pre-School Room, bleach was stored under the sink and accessible to the children which posed a safety risk.
4. Sharp edges on low furniture were not always cushioned which posed a safety risk.

Infection Control:

5. In the nappy changing room off the Baby Room, the foot operated bin was not working therefore staff and children handled the lid which posed an infection control risk.
6. In the Toddler and both Pre-school Rooms the foot operated bins were not working, staff and children lifted the lid which posed an infection control risk.
7. Soothers were also noted lying loosely on a shelf and not stored in individual named containers.
Additionally, an effective system for cleaning and sterilising soothers was not in place which posed an infection control risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

General Safety:

Corrective Action:

1. The heating system in the junior preschool room has been turned down, the water temperature is now reading within normal range.
2. The heating system in the junior preschool room has been turned down, the temperature of radiators now read within the normal range.
3. There has been a safety lock out on the press to make sure children cannot open it.
4. All low furniture will have new fitted cushioned material to prevent accidents.

Infection Control:

5. The bins in the nappy changing room have been replaced with new foot operated bins.
6. The bins in all the rooms have all been replaced with new foot operated bins.
7. All soothers have been placed in individual boxes with each child's name on them.

Preventive Action:

1. The water temperature will be checked every day to make sure they are at the correct temperature.
2. The radiator temperature will be checked every day to make sure they are at the correct temperature.
3. Bleach will not be left under the sink and the lock will always be on the press.
4. There will be no furniture with sharp edges.

Infection Control:

5. In the nappy changing area bins will be replaced when they are seen to be broken in the future.
6. All bins in rooms will be replaced when they are seen to be broken in the future.
7. Soothers will always be placed in containers when the children are not using them.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- Invoice for purchasing foot operator bins.
- Photographic evidence of system for managing soothers.
- Photographic evidence of locked cupboard where bleach is stored.
- Photographic evidence of temperature recording in relation to water and radiator temperatures which recorded normal temperatures.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. The registered provider has addressed each non-compliance to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service. Photographic evidence was submitted to demonstrate the systems that have been put in place as listed above, such as a weekly record of the water and radiator temperatures which demonstrated they were within the normal range. Regulation 23 has been addressed and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) A system was in place to record the arrival and departure times for each child attending the service daily. Children's arrival and departure times were documented in a roll book.

(3)(a) and (b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance as the inspectors were requested to record their time of arrival and departure.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The preschool children attending the service were adequately supervised at all times on the day of inspection.