

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN048		
Name of Service:	Playaways Creche		
Address of Service:	Foxglove Hill, Rocklands, Cavan, Co. Cavan		
Eircode:	H12 PW81		
Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Clarke		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	11/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	45	PM 39
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna		
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		

Description of service

Playaways Creche is a private service established in 2004. The service operates from a single-story building in a housing development within the town of Cavan. The service provides full day, part- time and sessional care for children aged 0 to 6 years, operating from 8am to 6pm each weekday and catering for a maximum of 51 children. There are three care rooms named Baby/Toddler room, Pre School 1 and Pre School 2. An office, kitchen, a sleep room and designated sanitary areas are available. School aged childcare is also provided. There are two outdoor areas for children use. There is parking for drop off and collection at the front of the premises.

Staffing

Twelve staff are employed in the service, which includes the registered provider and a cook. In addition, four students are currently on college work experience placements within the service.

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 may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9: Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11: Staffing Levels, Regulation 19: Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23: Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25: First Aid and Regulation 28: Insurance.

However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 24. 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. 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 registered provider, deputy 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*
- (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 service had a designated person in charge who is the registered provider, and a named person in charge to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider, and review of the staff roster it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or a named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through display of a staff roster and a person in charge noticeboard in the main entrance hallway.

(2) The staff files for 7 staff members were reviewed upon the services last inspection 12/07/2023.

Vetting records for the 7 staff as above, along with the staff files for 5 newly employed staff and 4 students on work experience placements were reviewed upon this inspection.

(a) A total of 12 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

(b) A total of 6 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the 5 new staff and 4 students. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all 12 employed childcare staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 5 new staff and 4 students demonstrated that no staff had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. Therefore, police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 5 newly employed staff, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for the four students on work experience was not required.

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 the inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed upon the inspectors arrival:

Three adults cared for 9 children aged 1 year 7 months to 2 years 3 months in the Baby/Toddler Room

Three adults cared for 16 children aged 2 years 3 months to 4 years in Preschool 1.

Two adults cared for 20 children aged 3 years 9 months to 4 years 11 months in Preschool 2.

In addition to the above, one work experience student was present in each of the care rooms. The registered provider arrived on site as the inspector arrived and was observed to help in the care rooms where needed during the inspection.

(8) A review of the staff rosters and the staff sign in and out records, demonstrated that there are at least 2 adults on the premises while the full day care service is in operation.

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

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

The atmosphere throughout the service was warm and welcoming. The children and staff were observed to be engaged in play and art activities upon the inspectors arrival. The staff interacted with the children using soft tones, and the children were observed to seek out the staff for support when needed.

Snack and mealtimes were observed to be calm and unrushed, with children given adequate time to finish their food. Drinking cups were available throughout the day for all children in their care rooms.

The children take in their own breakfast and snacks from home which include a variety of cereal, sandwiches, crackers, rice cakes, chopped fruit and yogurts. A hot meal is provided by an external catering company and heated on site each day by the service. The menu on display detailed that a creamy chicken tomato pasta was planned for the day of the inspection, which was observed to be served to the children.

Older children were observed to be independent while using the toilet, with younger children provided with supports where needed. Nappy changing was observed as a time where the staff engaged in one-to-one time with the younger children and were observed to talk to the children about their day.

Sleep for the younger babies is in line with their own routine, with the toddlers and older children observed to have a sleep after dinner time.

The children in Preschool 2 were observed to play outdoors, taking part in exercises and physical activity songs and were dressed appropriately for the weather.

The children's choices and needs were observed to be respected by the staff. Children in all the care rooms were observed to make choices during their play and learning, where activities were set up if children did not want to take part, they could choose to do something else at this time.

Supporting Relationships

A key worker system is in place, with staff compiling individual folders for each child to include observations and artwork. There was minimal staff change over observed throughout the service, and the children in each care room appeared familiar with the adults who were caring for them.

The staff were observed to promote positive behaviour through praising children where positive behaviour interactions were observed. The staff used age-appropriate strategies to help children find positive solutions to any problems they incurred during their play.

The staff were observed to demonstrate sensitivity towards the children and their families, through respecting parental wishes regarding their children's needs while also recognising the children's individual preferences. The staff were observed to treat each child with respect and addressed each child by name. Some discussions between staff and children about the child's home life was observed, which demonstrates familiarity among the staff regarding the child's home life.

The staff were observed to communicate using soft gentle tones while interacting with the babies, with staff and students observed to sing and cuddle the younger babies where they displayed signs of needing comfort.

Communication with parents is in person at arrival and collection times and via a messaging service. Staff advised the inspector that updates are sent out regularly to each care room, and that these updates would include recent interests and activities that the children had been taking part in.

The staff team were observed to work well together and were observed to assist across other care rooms when needed.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor environments were bright and welcoming. Each room had coloured art mobiles hanging from the roof, and many displays were on the walls to include family photos, birthday charts, letters, numbers and an emotions display. Several creative activities were on display to include painting prints in the Baby/Toddler Room, a "what's on my mind" activity and a creative activity of Storm Eowyn in Preschool 2, with a five senses activity along with "my hands" painting prints and coloured winter clothing was on display in Preschool 1.

The care rooms had sufficient space for the free movement of the children. Toys and equipment in the Baby/Toddler room included an exploring tray with musical trucks, jigsaws area, home play corner with play materials, pull up equipment to include wooden bead tables and push-a-long toys to encourage walking. The babies and toddler were observed to enjoy one to one time with the staff and students that cared for them, and to play peek a boo and by exploring their play environment.

The Preschool 2 room had a cosy corner with books, cushions and teddies, a large wall mounted chalkboard, a table top area with sorting and building toys, small world houses with people and animals and a construction area. A home area with play materials and dolls and equipment was also available. In the Preschool 2 room children were observed to take part in a creative valentine's sticking and gluing activity and a free play painting activity set up and supervised by the staff and students. The children were also observed to enjoy floor play time making their own creations with connecting straws.

Preschool 1 had a cosy mat area for reading books, tabletop area with toys to include jigsaws and matching activities, a home corner with many resources, dolls and suitable play equipment, musical toys, dress up clothing with role play toys and animals and cars. In the Preschool 1 room children were observed to take part in a heart painting activity for valentines, to enjoy play with a potato character game and through engaging with staff and students on the mat area to read books and rhymes.

The two outdoor play areas were secure and spacious. The wooden fencing and wall surrounding the outdoor play areas had painted animals and patterns on them, with photos of animals you may see in the outdoors attached to the fencing. In one area mainly used by preschool and school aged children a covered section with concrete surfacing along with an artificial grass and natural grassed area was provided. A wooden bench, wooden tractor, small play house, a mud kitchen, digging areas and tyres were provided. A storage shed with ride on trucks and toys was also available in this area.

The other area used mainly by the Baby/Toddler room had a ground surface of grass and concrete with a sheltered area. Toys and equipment to include a see saw, a small wooden climbing structure, and many ride on and push-a-long toys were available.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- During the inspection the premises was appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. A doorbell is used at both entrance doors to notify staff of visitor's presence. A visitor log is maintained, and the inspector was requested to sign in upon arrival.

- The garden areas were secured by wooden fencing with lockable gates.
- Storage areas remained inaccessible to the children, with locks fitted up high and out of the reach of children.
- Cleaning agents were stored up high out of the reach of the children.
- The children were observed to be appropriately supervised both indoors and outdoors on the day of inspection.
- The play equipment and toys used by the children were observed to be in good repair.
- Risk assessments were completed daily, with up-to-date records available.
- Fire exits remained unobstructed during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal operated bins and disposable paper towels were available at each hand wash sink. The children and staff were observed to wash their hands prior to snack and meal times, after painting activities and after nappy changing and toilet times.
- Nappy changing practises were carried out in line with the service's nappy changing policy. Individual disposable gloves and aprons were worn for each nappy change. The sanitary areas were well ventilated by a mixture of mechanical ventilation and openable windows.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned before and after snack and mealtimes. The children's lunchboxes which contained perishable items were stored in the fridge until required.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review with the records available completed up to date.
- Soothers belonging to younger children were stored in named individual boxes and cleaned on a regular basis.

Safe Sleep:

- A sleep room was located next to the Baby/Toddler room. Four standard cots with safety mattresses, which were fitted with waterproof coverings were available. Individual bed sheets and blankets are used by each child and laundered at least weekly on the premises.
- Sleep check records were available for review which recorded sleeping children's colour, breathing pattern, position and room temperature. The records reviewed were recorded at 10-minute intervals with staff signatures.
- The Baby/Toddler room is made up of two adjoining rooms with a door in the middle. This door is closed over to facilitate sleep time after dinner. This area had suitable floor beds set up which were observed in use on the day of inspection. Sleep care plans completed by the staff and the children's parents were available on file.

- The inspector was advised that the children from Preschool 1 room who may need a sleep, would sleep in the designated area set up in the Baby/Toddler room. On the day of the inspection there was no space in the Baby/Toddler area so the staff in Preschool 1 set up a sectioned off area within their care room for the children that required a sleep.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

Records reviewed did not adequately reflect the attendance of each child on the day of the inspection. One child in the Baby/Toddler room, and one child in Preschool 1 had not been signed in upon their arrival. It is acknowledged that when the inspector brought this to the attention of both room leaders, the records were updated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A consultation has taken place with all staff members of the importance of signing children into the roll book as soon as they arrive in the Creche. All staff are fully aware of the importance of signing children into the roll book as soon as they arrive into the creche and this will be monitored by the staff team going forward.

Summary Comment

The response submitted by the registered provider has provided assurance that the non-compliance has been adequately addressed. This will be reviewed upon the 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

- (1) The registered provider ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Five staff, four of whom were present on the day of inspection held in-date FAR training.
- (2) (a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available on the premises and stored in an accessible and conspicuous location out of the reach of children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 51 pre-school children attending the service on a Full Day Care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28/03/2024 to 27/03/2025.