

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW006
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Name of Service:	Ballon Rathoe Community Childcare Facility LTD
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Address of Service:	Ballon Childcare Facility, Ballon, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 A9DO
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael O'Toole
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/08/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	63	PM	59
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	N. Thornton
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
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Description of service

Ballon Rathoe Community Childcare Facility is a childcare service located in the village of Ballon in northwest county Carlow. The service provides full day care, part-time and sessional childcare services and is also registered to provide a school aged service for the local primary school located nearby.

The service is a community childcare service which is governed by a voluntary board of management composed of members of the local community. The service operates Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00 hours, providing childcare services for children from 0 to 6 years of age.

The childcare service operates from a purpose built two-storey building, which contains three childcare rooms for children aged 0 to 3 years, two sleep rooms, two nappy changing areas, children's toilet facilities, a designated kitchen and dining area on the ground floor. On the first floor there are three classrooms for the older preschool children with adjacent toilet facilities. Both floors have direct access to six outdoor spaces at the back of the building.

Currently an additional prefabricated classroom, that was at the side of the building, is being replaced with a wooden structured building, due to contain two additional classrooms. A change in circumstances application has been submitted to the early years inspectorate registration department.

Staffing

There were 17 staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The designated person in charge was also present and the registered provider was on site, for part of the inspection. Neither the designated person in charge nor the registered provider work directly with the children.

All staff present working directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations.

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(3)(4)- Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 (1)(2)-Staffing levels

Regulation 19 (1)(a)(b) (3)-Health Welfare and Development of the Child

however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed significant risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms the baby room, wobbler room, toddler room, playschool room 2 and preschool room 1. Preschool room 2 was not in operation on the day of inspection.

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

This inspection was triggered by receipt of information to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, designated 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) There was a designated person in charge of the service on the day of inspection. The designated person in charge remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The designated person in charge confirmed that there was a second named person available to deputise as required.

(c) A clear outline of the management of the structure was displayed in the service, identifying the lines of authority, accountability, the roles, and responsibilities of individual staff members in the service.

(2) Staff files for 22 staff members employed in the service were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file, for each of 22 staff members, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member who has access to the children as part of their role.

(d) Police vetting was available for each of two staff members, who had lived outside of the state for a period longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available in each staff member's file, demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the national framework of qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

On review of documentation, the inspector observed that the written policies, procedures, and statements specified in schedule 5 were available and open for inspection in the service. The service’s policy on managing behaviour, supervision policy and complaints policy were reviewed.

The policy on behaviour management outlined how children were supported during occasions of conflict and emotional upset, how positive behaviour was promoted by staff in the service and how staff were supported by management in supporting children’s emotional and behavioural needs.

It was documented in the behaviour management policy that any practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, neglectful, emotionally, or physically harmful towards a child were not permitted.

The service’s supervision policy detailed how staff were supervised and supported in their work practices in the service, including the frequency of supervision and details of the provision of continuous professional development, within the service.

The service complaints policy stated how a person could make a complaint, that the process was treated in a confidential manner and clearly outlined the process for how complaints were responded to, managed , recorded and resolved.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) During the inspection, the inspector observed that there was always an adequate number of staff working directly with the children in the service. On the morning of inspection there were 63 pre-school children being supervised directly by 17 staff members. An additional staff member was available to help or provide relief for staff breaks when required.

In the afternoon there were 59 children being supervised directly by 16 staff members

(2) During the inspection the ratio of staff supervising the children was greater than required.

In the baby room there were 9 children, one child aged 11 months and 8 children aged 1 to 2 years, being supervised directly by 3 staff members.

In the wobbler room there were 11 children aged 1 to 2 years being supervised directly by 3 staff members.

In the toddler room there were 14 children aged 2 to 3 years being supervised directly by 4 staff members.

In playschool 2, 14 children aged between 2.5 to 3 years being supervised directly by 3 staff members in the morning and in the afternoon, 13 children remained for a full day care service with the 3 staff members supervising.

In preschool 1 there were 15 children aged 3.5 to 5 years in the morning with 3 staff members supervising and in the afternoon 12 children remained for the full day care service, being supervised directly by 2 staff members.

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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

The following observations were made by the inspector on the day of inspection through direct observation of childcare practices, conversation with staff and review of documents.

(1)(a)(b) Basic needs of the children:

The service promoted a healthy eating policy with a three-week menu plan displayed in the main entrance hall for parents to see. The main meals were cooked onsite and served to the older children in the designated dining area. Parents provided all foods and snacks for the babies and children that only attended the sessional and part-time service. All perishable foods were stored in fridges in the classrooms, main kitchen or in the designated milk kitchen off the sleep room.

Foods observed eaten by the children for snack times on the day included sandwiches, rice cakes, wraps, crackers, cheese, fruit, and yogurts. Foods were served on plates at snack time and in the dining room at mealtimes, with appropriate eating utensils and drinking cups.

The main meal of the day, as documented in the menu was Shepherd's pie, which was observed to contain meat, gravy, peas, and carrots. Custard was provided for dessert.

Water was available for the children in each classroom to drink, each child has their own bottle or beaker of water which staff were observed to refill with drinking water as required. The children were able to easily access their bottle from a designated water table/ shelf.

In the baby room the staff were observed to frequently encourage and support the young children to have regular drinks of water. Staff were observed on occasions to sit and hold the children while bottle feeding. Children were placed in one of the four highchairs available for their dinners which staff were observed to carefully reheat to the correct temperature, before serving. Staff sat in front of the highchairs while feeding the children, waiting, and observing for cues that the child was ready for another spoonful. Staff talked to and encouraged the children as they had their meals. Additional snacks such as fruit and dry corn snacks were available if the young children demonstrated that they were hungry in between meals.

Staff informed the inspector that they followed the children's daily schedule in line with information provided by the parents. Each child in the baby room had personal daily schedule displayed on the wall, so that all staff working in the room were aware of their schedule.

The children's toileting and nappy changing needs were promptly attended to throughout the service, with staff observed to work together to ensure the children were attended to, supported, and encouraged. Older children who went to the toilet independently, were observed to be reassured that staff were available to support or be discreetly nearby should they need their assistance.

Staff in the baby, wobbler, and toddler rooms, were observed to promptly respond to children's cues if they were tired, reassuring them, changing nappies, or encouraging toileting before supporting them in their designated cots or beds in the sleep rooms.

Physical and material environments:

Each classroom was observed to have clearly defined areas of interest appropriate to the age of the children, for example in the baby room, there was clear space for the children to crawl freely between a soft play area, through a crawling tunnel and to a ball pit in another part of the room. Physical development was promoted with plenty of low-level secured furniture for the children to pull up on and stand. Age-appropriate mouthing toys, pull along toys, manipulative blocks and books were available for the children to explore and play with.

In each of the four other classrooms in operation on the day, there were various interest areas which included quiet/cosy areas, libraries, kitchens, musical instrument areas, nature tables, dress-up rails, construction tables, shops, tabletop activities and arts and crafts areas.

Children were observed engaged in story time, drawing, painting, matching games, threading, imaginary play, constructing and making puzzles in each classroom.

Children from the wobbler, toddler, playschool 2 and preschool 1 room were observed to avail of outdoor play for two periods during the inspection.

The service had a variety of outdoor play spaces at the back of the building, four sectioned outdoor soft play areas at ground level, which could be directly accessed from the classrooms on the ground floor. There were an additional two sectioned play areas on the higher level, comprised of a playground and football pitch on artificial grass, which were secured by a high wire fence and could be accessed directly from the first-floor classrooms over a metal bridge extending from the first-floor exit door.

While outside the children were observed running, climbing, using the climbing frames, look out towers and push toys available.

At the front of the building there was an alternative spacious area of soft play surface which was marked with patterns for hopscotch and traffic lanes. Children were observed playing chase and hide and seek with their key workers, laughing, and hugging the staff members as they caught them.

Supporting relationships around children:

The following examples of how the staff in the service supported relationships around children were observed on the day:

Staff were observed to be familiar with the children in their room and a key worker system was in place in the service which supported the children to form secure attachments and build close relationships with the staff members caring for them. Each child's key worker was a familiar point of contact for parents and shared information with parents at drop off and collection time which included how the child's day went, how they ate, slept, interacted with their friends and their learning and development.

Children were observed to be familiar with all the staff caring for them, requesting staff to play games, telling them what they were interested in doing next, expressing their emotions, if they were tired, hungry, or sad and simply at times just looking for nurturing and cuddles.

Children in the baby, wobbler and toddler rooms transitioned with ease when staff asked if they could change their nappies, going to the staff member to be lifted and carried to the changing room. Staff were observed to respectfully talk to the children to prepare them in advance for tasks to be carried out and children were observed to happily go with staff, to get their nappy changed, wash their hands, to sit in the highchair or the table for mealtimes or to have sun cream applied before going outside.

- (2) The registered provider, designated person in charge and staff were aware of the prohibited practices as detailed in the service's management of behaviour policy. The inspector observed that children's behaviour was supported by the staff in a competent and positive manner.

Minor behaviour problems such as taking turns, difficulty with sharing and inclusion in activities were resolved promptly by the staff, who supported and included the children involved, in finding a positive solution and outcome.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The inspector did not observe the children in the baby room availing of outdoor play on the day of inspection. The designated person in charge stated that the children in the baby room do avail of the outdoor space at the back of the building, however this was not observed on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following corrective and preventive actions were submitted by the service:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Outdoor play time for the children in the baby room has been added to the baby room daily timetable. They will now have morning and afternoon outdoor play time (weather permitting) timetable attached.

The leader in the room will ensure staff follow the daily timetable which now includes daily outdoor playtime for the children in the baby room.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the revised baby room's daily routine was submitted to the office of the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 service was appropriately secured with an electronic keypad system at a large metal entrance gate outside the service, ensuring that access to unauthorised persons was restricted and that children in the service could not leave unsupervised.

Once inside the main gate, the main entrance door was also secured with a keypad system and staff could see through the large clear windows at the front of the building.

The outdoor perimeter of the service was secured by high metal fencing and had coded keypad systems at each entrance.

A camera security system was also in place throughout the service and at the front and back of the premises.

The designated person in charge informed the inspector that a daily risk assessment of each of the outdoor play areas was recorded prior to children going outside.

Any cleaning products or equipment were stored in a designated secure area away from the children.

Infection Control:

In each of the care rooms children were observed washing their hands prior to meal or snack times, after having nappies changed, going to the toilet, cleaning their noses, outdoor and messy play.

In line with the service's nappy changing policy, staff were observed to wash their hands at the appropriate times, to wear new gloves and a new apron for each individual nappy change and to ensure the child was supported with handwashing after the procedure.

Administration of Medication:

The service has an administration of medication policy which outlined the procedure for staff to follow in administering any medication to a child in the service. The staff showed the inspector where medications were safely stored in the service and were able to outline in detail the procedure for administering temperature reducing medications. No child required medication to be administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

There were two designated sleep room in the service, one adjacent to the baby and wobbler room which contained a total of nine cots and a second adjacent to the toddler room which contained seven cots and nine

stackable beds. Staff caring for children sleeping, were observed to carry out safe sleep practices in line with the service's safe sleep policy and were observed physically checking sleeping children every 10 minutes, and maintaining a written record of each child's colour, breathing and position on those occasions.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The inspector observed that there were inadequate nappy changing facilities provided for the number of children requiring nappy changing in the service.

There was one nappy changing area available for the 20 children, who were attending the baby and wobbler rooms on the day of inspection.

This was not in compliance with infection control guidelines for early years settings.

It is acknowledged that a second nappy changing area was available in the toilet facilities adjacent to the toddler room, however the designated person in charge and staff informed the inspector that 11 out of the 14 children attending the toddler room required nappy changing.

One nappy changing area, including a hand wash basin, is required for each group of 11 children that require nappy changing procedures in a childcare setting.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Corrective Action:

The service has a plan in place to section off an area in the baby room to facilitate a new changing area with changing unit and sink. This will be used for the babies in the baby room.

Preventive Action:

Once this is constructed, the service will have two changing areas in the creche end to cater for the 22 children.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted. A timeframe for completion by 27 October 2023, has been provided.

Summary Comment

The action submitted is appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of this action will be reviewed on next inspection.