

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW039
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Name of Service:	St. Catherine's Community Services Centre
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Address of Service:	St Joseph's Road, Carlow, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 T4C6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marian Duffy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	37	PM	28
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child & family Agency Athy Road Carlow
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma 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

St. Catherines Community Services Centre is located on St. Josephs Road in the centre of Carlow town. This full day care childcare service is situated within the larger St. Catherines Community Services Centre and is comprised of four classrooms providing full day care, part-time and session early childhood care and education (ECCE) services for children aged 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 09:15 to 17:30 hours, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year, September to June.

Staffing

There were 17 staff employed in the service, which included 5 students in early childhood care and education and a cleaner. The registered provider does not work in the service. All staff employed in the service to work directly with the preschool children held qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 9 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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 21,22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 15, 21, 22 and 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler, Toddler Pre-school and ECCE classrooms.

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 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.

(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) The designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The staff roster demonstrated that the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation.

(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 each of the classrooms in the service.

(2) Staff files for 17 staff members were reviewed by the inspector.

- (a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the 17 staff members, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The registered provider demonstrated partial compliance with the re-vetting timeframes for staff members 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) Police vetting certificates were available for five staff members employed in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role in the service were working directly with the preschool children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The following adult to child ratios were maintained in each of the four classrooms throughout the inspection. In the Wobbler room there were 6 children aged 1 to 2 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

In the Toddler room 7 children aged 2 to 3 years were directly cared for by 3 staff members and 1 student.
 In the afternoon there were 6 children aged 2 to 3 years cared for by the 3 staff members
 In the Preschool classroom there were 15 children aged 3 to 5 cared for directly by 3 staff members and a student.
 In the ECCE classroom there were 9 children aged 3 to 5 years cared for by 2 staff members.
 In the evening there were 28 preschool children present in the service directly cared for by 9 staff members.
 (8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff the inspector was assured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of pre-school children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each preschool child.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

There was adequate and appropriate furniture, play equipment and materials provided for the children in each of the four classrooms appropriate to their age and needs.

Each classroom contained interest areas which included kitchen/ home areas, role play areas, construction areas, soft comfortable rest and reading areas, tables with inviting play resources such as practical open ended kitchen materials, play dough and utensils for shaping and rolling, sensory popper toys, small world figurines such as dinosaurs and farm animals and sensory trays of coloured rice.

There were child level shelves in each classroom which provided children with access to a variety of colourful and wooden manipulative, connective and stackable materials, jigsaws, pegboards, bead and maze units, art and creative resources and mark making materials.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The inspector observed that children brought their food for their snacks from home. A refrigerator was provided in each classroom for children to store their lunch boxes in.

On observation of snack time at 10:44 hours the inspector observed that the contents of the children's snacks brought from home were healthy and nutritious as was required outlined by the information provided to parents at registration in the service's healthy eating policy. Yogurts, sandwiches, fruit, cheese, crackers and breadsticks were observed.

In each classroom the children had access to a drinks station where they could access their own individual drinking bottles or beakers.

At snack and mealtimes children had the option of milk or water to drink. A hot meal was provided each day which was documented in the service’s menu plan.

Examples of hot meals that were provided on the service’s menu plan included homemade beef burgers, mushroom sauce with vegetables and potatoes, pork chops stuffing, vegetables and potatoes, chicken fillets, cheese sauce, vegetables and potatoes, roast beef vegetables and potatoes as well as roast chicken , cubed turnip and carrot, mash, stuffing and gravy which was the hot meal served on the day of inspection. The staff and children informed the inspector that the menus had been created in consultation with each other and the kitchen in the community centre which provides the fresh meals daily.

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 childcare classrooms were located at the back of the premises. Parents or guardians were observed to be familiar with the location of their child’s classroom and at drop off and collection used a call bell system.

Any person visiting the service was required to report to the main reception of the centre where the designated person in charge or deputy designated person in charge met them prior to authorising entry to the childcare service. Records of any authorised persons visiting the childcare service were maintained.

The outdoor play areas were secured with a high six-foot cement brick wall.

Infection Control:

There was an adequate number of toilet and nappy changing facilities provided in the service to meet the needs of the children attending the service.

Each toilet unit had child height handwash basins, supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

The older children were observed to use the toilet and hand washing facilities independently, while staff supported and assisted the younger children as needed.

Staff were observed to support and prompt the children to wash their hands correctly after using the toilet, nappy-changing, after messy and outdoor play, and before snack times.

Staff were observed to carry out nappy changing procedures in line with the service's nappy changing policy and in adherence with the service's hand washing and infection control policy

Records of cleaning schedules in each classroom were observed to be maintained.

Cleaning equipment and materials were secured safely in a designated storage area which was inaccessible to the children.

Administration of Medication:

Staff were well informed regarding procedures for administration of anti-febrile, prescribed and emergency medication in line with the service's administration of medication policy. Individual emergency medication plans had been developed specifically for children on prescribed emergency medication. Medications were stored securely and safely within the service.

Safe Sleep:

There was a designated sleep room adjacent to the wobbler room with seven standard cots provided for children under two years of age. Each child had a designated cot which was identified with the child's photograph. Staff were observed to ensure any sleeping child had physical checks, colour, breathing and sleep position, carried out very ten minutes with the results recorded in line with the service's safe sleeping policy.

A few stackable child sized beds were also available for any children older than two years to sleep on if required.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place for any outings that staff took children on away from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Garda Vetting was available for all staff members. However, two Garda vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal Of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following corrective and preventive actions.

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Following inspection, management immediately applied for re-vetting of the two staff members found to have Garda Vetting Certificates older than three years.

Management will ensure that re-vetting of staff members takes place within a three yearly basis from May 2025 in adherence to /with the Early Years Inspectorate Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copies of the required renewed Garda Vetting Certificates.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider meet the regulatory requirements of regulation 23. These 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

(1) There were four staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, there was at least one staff member with FAR training present. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

There was first aid bag available in each of the four classrooms.

The first aid contents were adequate, and records demonstrated that the first aid contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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 firefighting 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) The registered provider ensured that there was a monthly fire drill carried out in the service and a record was maintained of same.
- (b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance checks of the firefighting equipment and fire alarm system in the premises. The last maintenance check on the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in May 2025 and for the smoke alarm system as having taken place on 20 February 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the main entrance hall of the building and in the classrooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for the community childcare centre and associated services was available for review

The insurance certificate provided cover from 07 May 2025 to the 06 May 2026.