

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL018		
Name of Service:	Cara Children's Centre		
Address of Service:	Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal		
Eircode:	F92KW20		
Name of Registered Provider:	Joe Boland		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	25/05/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM 7
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate. Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue , Tullamore, Co. Offaly		
Inspection undertaken by:	Ann Spain		
Title:	Registration Support Manager		

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

Cara Children’s Centre is a part-time service opened at the present address since September 2022. The community run service is located in a family resource centre in a commercial area of Letterkenny town. The childcare service is located in a separate building to the family resource centre. The service cares for children in the age range two to six years and is operational between the hours of 9.00am and 2.00pm. Rooms in the service include an entrance hallway, office, three playrooms, children’s sanitary accommodation off each room, two nappy changing rooms, staff sanitary accommodation incorporating a disability access toilet, staff room, staff kitchen, cleaning store room and storage areas off rooms for both toys and low level beds. A school age service is provided in two of the rooms between 2.00 and 5.00 pm.

Staffing

The service is staffed by ten adults which includes a manager. Two of the staff are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model scheme (AIM). The registered provider does not work directly in 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 announced and focused on the area of governance ,health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9 Management and recruitment, regulation 11 staffing levels, regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child, regulation 22 Food and drink, regulation 25 First aid, regulation 26 fire safety measures and regulation 28 Insurance. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report. The scope of the inspection included all rooms in the service.

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 manager and 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 both a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) Both the designated person in charge and the named person to deputise as required were present in the service on arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the inspection. The person in charge worked in a management capacity in the service and provided relief cover, as necessary. The deputy person in charge worked in a care room in the service.

- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service and each staff member was aware of their roles and responsibilities in the care rooms allocated to work in.
- (2)(a) Two validated references from past employers were held on file in respect of four of the staff working in the service. One validated reference from a past employer was held on file in respect of six staff working in the service.
- (b) A second validated reference from a source other than past employers were held on file in respect of six staff members working in the service.
- (c) A vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau as conducted in 2020 was held on file in respect of one staff member, in 2021 in respect of three staff members, in 2022 in respect of four staff members and in 2023 in respect of the remaining two staff working in the service.
- (d) A police clearance was held on file in respect of four staff who had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as adults.
- (4) All staff working in the service has childcare qualifications at Quality and Qualifications Ireland(QQI) level 5 to level 8. There was also evidence on file to confirm that staff had engaged in professional development training.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of staff were caring for the children in the three playrooms in the service.

Two staff cared for a total of 11 children in the age range 2 to 3 years in the toddler room in the service and availing of part-time childcare.

Three staff cared for 18 children in preschool year 1 and in the age range 3 to 4 years who were availing of sessional childcare.

Three staff cared for 18 children in preschool year 2 and in the age range 3 to 6 years who were availing of sessional childcare.

(2) The service attendance record confirmed that the maximum number of children cared for in the toddler room was 15 with a maximum of 12 children present on any one day for part-time childcare with 2 staff present in the room.

(4)(a)(b) The service attendance record for preschool year 1 confirmed that the maximum number of children on register and cared for in the room on any one day was 21 for sessional care with 3 staff present. The service attendance record confirmed that the maximum number of children on register and cared for in preschool year 2 was 22 children for sessional care with 3 staff present in the room.

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

Compliance Information

The following measures were observed to ensure that each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

Basic needs.

- Childrens toilets were located directly off each playroom for easy access by children and supervision by staff for both using toilets and supervised hand washing. Wash hand basins located at child height were also located in all playrooms in the service. Staff were observed to line up children for hand washing before break time in preschool year 1 and on return from outdoor play in preschool year 2.
- Beakers and a jug of water was provided in the preschool rooms for children to avail of water as required. Baskets of fruit were also provided by the service for children in the playrooms.
- Breaks times in the rooms were signalled in advance in both sessional rooms and healthy lunches comprising of sandwiches, crackers and cheese , yogurts, pasta and fruit were enjoyed by children on the day of inspection.
- Break time in both preschool rooms was social with children sitting at low level tables with the staff and engaging in friendly conversation. Staff answered children's questions as was the case when a staff member was asked was the inspector "her mum" in preschool year 2.
- The nappy changing rooms off both the toddler room and preschool year 1 had a supply of disposable aprons and gloves for staff use. Individual containers and shelving provided storage for nappies and creams close to the changing stations. Wash hand basins with hot and cold water, liquid soap, disposable paper towel dispensers and foot pedal operated bins were located in the nappy changing areas and observed to be used by staff for hand washing subsequent to nappy changing.
- Children in all rooms were observed to avail of outdoor play during the course of the inspection starting with preschool room 1 at 9.40 am and progressing to preschool year 2 and the toddler room on a staggered basis.

- Staff in preschool year 2 and the toddler room were observed to assist children put on their coats on request for outdoor play.
- Rest areas were provided in all playrooms in the service comprising of an all-weather synthetic grass surface secured in place on a timber pallet in preschool room 1 with cushions provided. Low level soft couches and floor mats were provided in year 2 preschool. In addition to the provision of a soft floor mat in the playroom , individual low-level beds were stored in a room off the toddler room for children cared for in the room to rest and sleep on demand. Individually labelled sheets and blankets were also held in storage for use by children. Books within easy reach of children were located in rest areas in all rooms.

Supporting relationships around children.

- The atmosphere in the playrooms was calm and relaxed. Children were observed to move to interest areas for play which was child led with staff offering assistance and participating in activities as required.
- A staff member was observed to sit and comfort a child in the outdoor play area for both morning and before home time play as requested by the child while other children continued to play. Staff in the playrooms were observed to sit at the children’s level and to be both caring and kind as children moved to their chosen areas of interest in the rooms.
- A tree with pictures of family members on branches was used in support a sense of home and belonging in preschool year 2. This was facilitated in preschool year 1 by having pictures of children engaged in activities on the walls. A picture of a circus and trucks was used as a theme to pick up on the children’s interest in lorries as observed in the grounds outside of the service in the playroom. The individually labelled baskets on a high shelf in the nappy changing room with pictures of each child and a profile of each child’s likes, favourite games, best friend, what they needed help with and detail of family members served to promote conversation during nappy changes.
- A “wellbeing wall” with a mirror and pictures of children with happy, sad, tired, ill, surprised , tired, hungry and angry faces was used to promote conversation and an understanding of feelings and emotions in preschool year 2.
- Pictures of cakes, candles and balloons were used in the playrooms to indicate children’s names and their birthdays.
- Notice boards were provided in all rooms to display the children’s artwork. Ladybirds and their lifecycle were on display in the toddler room. Pictures of fish and animals were used to promote summer in preschool year 2.

- The use of a world globe, photos, dance days, marking festivals and different food choices were examples of themes used to support children of different ethnic backgrounds and cultures in the service.
- A picture of each staff member and a staff profile was positioned on the entrance door to each playroom to give an outline of children’s key worker qualifications, rolls, experience and hobbies.
- In addition to learning journals and scrap books , an electronic communications application was available to communicate information on children’s development, progress, care and any concerns between home settings and the service.

Physical and material environment.

- The rooms in the service were brightly painted, clean and well maintained on the day of inspection.
- Windows in all playrooms were open allowing fresh air directly from outside into the rooms when children were present.
- Sinks were provided in all three playrooms to assist with daily cleaning in the rooms.
- Table and low-level chairs were provided in all playrooms for children to sit for tabletop activities and break times.
- Playrooms were well resourced with play materials and toys for imaginative, manipulative, sensory, problem solving and messy play in defined areas of interest in all playrooms. Toys and equipment were located on open low-level shelving and in containers at floor level to allow children select toys of their choice to play with. Children were observed to move individually and in groups to various areas of interest depending on their chosen play preferences in the playrooms.
- Areas of interest in the playrooms included home corners with cookers, utensils, food and dolls. Building blocks of different sizes, textures and dimensions were provided in construction areas. A range of puzzles, games and flash cards were provided to facilitate tabletop activities. Arts and crafts materials including paint, colours, paper, shapes and scissors were provided in the rooms. Small animals, toys on wheels and connecting toys were provided for imaginative play. Stands with water and sand were provided in preschool room 1 and 2 for messy play. Low level soft slides, a dolls kitchen, both soft shapes and toys and a rocking horse was provided in the toddler room.
- The outdoor play area had an all-weather surface and was safely fenced in by a concrete wall and high-level timber fencing. Children from all playrooms were observed playing outdoors in tents, the sand box and on the balancing timber blocks. Children from the toddler room were observed to enjoy playing with a soft tunnel outdoors.

- A reserve stock of toys and play equipment was held in storage in a storeroom off preschool room 1.
- Staff engaged and played with the children for both outdoor and indoor play and were available to offer assistance at the request of both individual and groups of children. A staff member was observed to play football with two children from the toddler room outdoors. A staff member in the toddler room was observed to sit on the floor and allow a child in a nurse's outfit to bandage her arm and check her temperature.

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

All snacks and meals were provided by parents and guardians for children present for both sessional and part-time care. A refrigerator was provided in preschool room 1 and in the toddler room for storage of perishable foods and snacks. Children cared for in preschool year 2 had the use of the refrigerator in the staff kitchen to store their lunch boxes. Jugs of water and beakers were provided by the service in addition to the drinks provided by parents and guardians to allow children avail of a drink throughout their day in the service. The lunches observed in both preschool rooms were in keeping with the healthy eating policy for the service. The sink in all playrooms assisted with clean up after break times.

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) Nine staff members had up to date first aid responder training. First aid certification was valid until August 2024 in the case of all trained staff.

(2)(a)(b) A first aid box was located on high level shelving in both playrooms and in the nappy changing area off the toddler room.

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) A record of fire drills as conducted was maintained in the service. It was noted that the last monthly fire drill was conducted on 4 May 2023.

(b) The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment indicated that an annual service was conducted in June 2022. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system indicated that a service was last conducted on 16 February 2023.

(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was wall mounted in all playrooms. A fire assembly point was positioned on the grounds at the front of the building.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 44 children in daily attendance in a sessional service and 18 children in daily attendance in a part-time service. Insurance was valid from 26 January 2023 to 25 January 2024.