

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL035
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Name of Service:	Donagh Creche Ltd
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Address of Service:	Mullins, Carndonagh, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 FE04
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Name of Registered Provider:	Stella Farren
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	59	PM	49
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner
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).

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Description of service

Donagh Creche Ltd. is a privately operated part-time day care service. It is situated on the outskirts of Carndonagh town on the Inishowen peninsula of county Donegal. The service is registered to cater for children aged 1 - 6 years. The hours of operation are from 9:00hrs to 13.55hrs. A sessional service is available from 9:00hrs to 12:00hrs. The premises consists of a detached, split level, former domestic dwelling that has been substantially upgraded to provide the early years facility. On the upper floor there are two care rooms, and a kitchen area, with a newly converted large attic storage space and office. On the lower level there are two further care rooms with a second kitchen area, and a sleep room off one of the care rooms. Three separate outdoor play areas are provided on the premises including a sensory garden and a large, covered area to protect children from the elements.

Staffing

There were ten adults present on the day of inspection, including the manager, who was available to staff in a supernumerary capacity throughout the day of inspection. The registered provider was also present in the service on the day of inspection and was available if required.

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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following: Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment, Regulation 11 - Staffing levels, Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child, Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials, Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 25 - First aid, and Regulation 26 – Fire safety measures.

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, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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 has a designated person in charge and a named person who can deputise as needed.

(b)

On the day of inspection, the person in charge was always onsite.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in the service, which identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2)

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On the day of the inspection, the person in charge confirmed that there were 13 staff members who worked in the service. This included the registered provider and the person in charge. Recruitment files in respect of the 13 staff members were reviewed, and the following information was available:

(a) Fifteen written and validated references for were on file for eleven staff from previous employers.

(b) Eleven written and validated references were on file for eight staff from other sources.

2)(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all thirteen adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(2)(d) International police vetting was available for one adult who had resided outside of the state for a period of six consecutive months or more as an adult.

(4) Twelve adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement

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)

An adequate number of staff were caring for the children in the four playrooms in the service.

- Toddler Room – Three adults cared for a total of 12 children in the age range 18 months of age to 2 years and 6 months of age in the toddler room in the service availing of part-time childcare.

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- Junior Room - Three adults cared for a total of 21 children 3 to 4 years of age in the Junior room in the service availing of part-time childcare.
- Senior Preschool room one - Three adults cared for a total of 18 children in the age range of 4 to 5 years of age availing of part-time childcare.
- Senior Preschool room two – One adult cared for a total of 8 children in the age range of 4 to 5 years of age availing of part-time childcare.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

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

(1) (a) (b)

The children's learning, development and well-being was observed to be facilitated on the day of inspection. The care rooms were laid out with well-defined areas of interest. Children were free to choose their own activities. The materials supplied in the rooms were age appropriate for the children in each of the care rooms. The service promoted healthy eating. Food and snacks were provided by parents. Lunch boxes were stored in the fridge in each of the care rooms. Mealtime was observed to be a very social occasion between all children and staff. Once finished, children were observed to clean up independently. After snack time in the junior preschool room one, the children had circle time. This involved an interactive story told by the staff member. The children read aloud with the story and sang educational songs afterwards. Alphabet, colours and numbers were learned through song. In the Junior preschool room two, they used the Bia Blasta program. The programme treated lunchtime as

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a learning activity. Children are encouraged to help with setting the table, serving themselves using proper utensils, and clearing up afterward. On the day of inspection, the children made their own wraps with ingredients bought fresh that morning. All children were observed to enjoy the process. Sensory opportunities were available to the children through arts, crafts, nature tables, and sand and water area in the rooms. Sensory opportunities were also available outdoors in a designated sensory garden.

Children were offered the opportunity to play outside in the morning session of the service. It was evident that children played outside in all-weather types. On the day of inspection, it was raining, and children were dressed appropriately. A sheltered area was also available. Staff were observed to interact well with the children in the sensory garden. A key-worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for supporting relationships with designated children and their parents. Daily communication between staff and parents was recorded and highlighted to appropriate staff members. Children's individual activity books contained learning stories for parents to be kept informed of their child's development. Curriculum plans were displayed and documented on notice boards throughout the service. Children's artwork was displayed throughout the service.

Staff were observed to sit with children throughout the day and engaged in child led conversation and activities. Staff were also observed to sit and chat with children during mealtimes. Staff interacted well with the children in a respectful, and sensitive manner throughout the day. The service ensured each child's comfort by offering flexible sleep and rest periods as required to their individual needs. Staff noted that they work closely with parents to agree on routines that adapt to how a child feels on any given day. The toddler room features a dedicated sleep space equipped with two cots and four floor beds. While these facilities remain fully available to support the children's requirements, no children required sleep during the inspection, reflecting a responsive approach to their natural rhythms. Verbal and non-verbal interactions were carried out by staff, using low tones and down at the child's level, labelling for children, and using open ended questions in their discussion. Children were handled in a sensitive and kind manner. Children of toileting age were encouraged to be independent. They were supervised and assisted as required.

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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

In all rooms there was a variety of equipment to encourage play through learning. This included a library for language development skills. There was a play kitchen area, and a dress up areas with different costumes and uniforms to promote role play and imagination in all rooms. The rooms included an area for art to promote mark making and creativity. Fine motor skills were displayed throughout the service through jigsaws, art and craft and puzzles. There was also a variety of toys such as dolls, teddys and small playhouses. Child sized tables and chairs suitable for the age of the children was available for the numbers attending the service. The service had a variety of equipment and materials which were adequate and suitable for the children attending. This included push bikes, sit on toy tractors and plastic toys which promoted balance and coordination in the outdoor area.

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 front entrance door to the premises was found to be locked and secured upon arrival to the service, preventing unauthorised exit or entry. The rear entrance door to the premises was also locked and secured.
- Internal door handles were positioned up high to prevent children from opening them.
- The outside garden areas were fenced and gated. The gates were secured whilst children were outside.
- Play materials and equipment appeared in good order throughout the premises.
- Cleaning products were stored out of reach of children.
- The hot water provided at the children's wash hand basins was controlled to a safe temperature below 43°C for hand washing.

Infection Control:

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- The premises was observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Tables and sanitary areas were observed to be cleaned regularly by staff.
- Foot pedal bins were observed throughout the premises.
- Children's hands were routinely washed, before snack and after toileting. Staff assisted the children when necessary. Child friendly handwashing posters were observed beside the sinks.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff provided for each child's comfort and each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation if required.
- Sleep provision in the service was flexible, agreed with parents and catered for children's sleep requirements on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection to ensure safe evacuation in the event of a fire or other emergency.
- Evidence of regular fire drills was displayed on the notice board.

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

The registered provider ensured that.

(1) at all times, there was a person trained in first aid for children immediately available to the children always attending the service.

(2) (a) (b). The first aid equipment was readily available and safely stored in a conspicuous position in the service.

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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 fire fighting 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 24 of March 2026.
- (b) The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment indicated that an annual service was conducted in November 2025. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system indicated that a service was last conducted In November 2025.
- (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 side of the building.