

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL037				
Name of Service:	Donegal Playgroup Ltd				
Address of Service:	Michael Cooney Memorial Park, Mullins, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal				
Eircode:	F94 AX79				
Name of Registered Provider:	Tina O'Donnell				
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	17/06/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>27</td> <td>PM</td> <td>16</td> </tr> </table>	AM	27	PM	16
AM	27	PM	16		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84				
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen				
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

Donegal Playgroup offers both sessional and part time care for children aged two-six years. The service caters for a maximum of 40 children and currently operates from 09:00am-14:00pm each weekday. The service participates in both the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) and the National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

Staffing

There were six adults employed to work in the service along with three staff employed under the CE scheme. On the day of inspection there were seven adults present in the service including the manager. The registered provider is not on the premises on a daily basis. The service has a named person in charge and a named designated deputy who are on the premises during the hours of operation.

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 an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,17,23,24,25,26 and 28. 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 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)
The registered provider ensured that.
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
 - (c) There was 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.
- (2)
On the day of inspection, seven adults were present, the person in charge, four adults who were employed to work directly with the children and two adults employed under a CE scheme.
The following vetting information was available for nine adults:
- (a) Twelve written validated references from past employers for eight of the adults.
 - (b) Six written validated references from reputable sources for five of the adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for nine staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.
- (4)
Six of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, 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.

(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 inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.

(8)

The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample review of attendance records.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that all parents and guardians of children attending the service were adequately informed, as evidenced by the distribution of the Parent Handbook. This handbook included: names and positions of the management team, staff, and board of directors. Details of the service provided, including ratios, facilities, programme of care, and staff information. Ongoing communication with parents was observed through a prominently displayed notice board at the entrance of the service. The notice board included:

- Service information
- Fee structure
- Staff-to-child ratios
- Facilities available
- Programme of care
- Management and staff details
- Weekly staff roster
- Illness guide
- Child safety statement

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 main entrance was secured on the morning of the unannounced inspection, effectively preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- All materials and equipment were in good condition and well-maintained.
- Warm running water was available for handwashing, maintained at a safe temperature below 43°C.

- Cleaning products and equipment were stored securely, out of children's reach.
- The outdoor area was enclosed with tall fencing and a bolted gate, ensuring a safe and secure play environment.
- Grapes provided as part of snacks were appropriately cut to reduce the risk of choking.
- All indoor and outdoor toys and play equipment were safe for use and in good repair.
- Storage facilities were kept inaccessible to children, promoting safety and organisation.
- Waste disposal units were securely stored and inaccessible to children both indoors and outdoors.
- Blind cords were safely secured to eliminate the risk of entanglement or injury.
- No trailing electrical flexes were present in the service, reducing trip hazards.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in both care rooms.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels. Older children were observed to wash their hands with support, before snacks, meals and after nappy changing.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by openable windows and mechanical ventilation.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes.
- Foot pedal bins were observed throughout the premises.
- Soap was readily available to children to wash their hands prior to eating and after both toileting. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively

Administration of Medication:

- When interviewed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible

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.

Compliance Information

1) The registered provider ensured that a daily record was maintained for all preschool children attending the service. This record accurately documented each child's actual time of arrival and departure from the service.

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) (a) (b)

The service demonstrated that a staff held in date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and were always available to the children while in the service.

(2) (a) (b)

A fully stocked first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location in the service and available to the children as required.

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 procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 18th may 2025.
 - (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was 26th November 2024 and the fire detection system was dated 17th June 2025.
- (4)
- There was a notice of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire, which was displayed in a conspicuous position in the main entrance hall and in each pre-school rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured adequate insurance was in place for the preschool service for 40 children up until 27 March 2025.