

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015DL038

**Name of Service:** Drumkeen Community Childcare

**Address of Service:** Drumkeen, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal

**Eircode:** F93 F242

**Name of Registered Provider:** Caroline Patton

**Service type:** Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

**Date of Inspection:** 16/05/2024

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	70	PM	47
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**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Donegal Early Years Inspectorate,  
St. Conal's Campus,  
Letterkenny,  
Co. Donegal.  
F95 XK94

**Inspection undertaken by:** L. Mc Glynn and S. Meehan.

**Title:** Early Years Inspectors.

### 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

Drumkeen Community Childcare is a not-for-profit service registered to provide full day, part time and sessional preschool care for children aged 0 – 6 years. The service operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm each weekday and includes a sessional service from 9.00am 12.00md during term time. The service operates from a two-story purpose-built premises within the townland of Drumkeen. There are three care rooms on the ground floor namely the baby, wobbler and toddler rooms. There are two rooms on a lower ground floor level which can be accessed via an external staircase at the side of the premises. These two rooms cater for the junior and senior preschool children. Sanitary accommodation for children is available adjacent to each care room and there are two designated sleep rooms adjacent to the baby and wobbler rooms. There is a kitchen on the premises where all meals and snacks are prepared. An office, staff room, storage area and staff sanitary accommodation is also available on site. A spacious fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the front and rear of the premises subdivided into separate play areas.

### Staffing

There were 21 staff members working in the service at the time of the inspection. This included one full time manager, one staff member designated to office duties and one staff member working in the kitchen. The remaining 18 staff members worked directly with children.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 27. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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 inspectors wish 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

(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 registered provider ensured that there was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise.
  - (b) The registered provider had a manager in place who was the person in charge and was on the premises and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.  
Staff rosters indicated that the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.
  - (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and roles and responsibilities of each employee. During the inspection, a manager and a deputy was available.

(2) At the time of inspection, the person in charge confirmed that there were 21 named staff members who worked in the service. Seven of these staff members had commenced working in the service since the previous inspection. A review of records demonstrated that the vetting documentation for 14 of the staff had been reviewed during previous inspection and were found to be compliant under this regulation. With reference to the above listed elements of Regulation 9, recruitment records in respect of the seven newly recruited staff were reviewed and the following information was available:

- (a)(b) Twelve validated references on file, in respect of the seven adults were from past employers or a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Documentary evidence was provided to indicate that six staff members had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or equivalent.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a)(b) Two of the references on file for two employees were from sources other than a past employer or a source other than a past employer.
- (4) There was no evidence of file to demonstrate that one staff member had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or equivalent.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2) (a) (b) The reference was sought. Ensure staff who have not been in employment, have a more suitable reference rather than a character reference.
- (4) The letter from the Department has since arrived. In future, staff will not be able to commence employment until the fast-track application is received.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation was submitted to evidence compliance.

### Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) and (4) have been adequately addressed.

## 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) A review of roster showed that a sufficient number of adults were provided to work with children whenever the service was in operation.
- On the morning of the unannounced inspection there were 14 adults working directly with 70 preschool children in the morning and 11 adults working with 47 preschool children in the afternoon.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was complied with in the service for the respective age group in a full day care 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*

### Compliance Information

(19)(1)(a)

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service, children's cultural and dietary requirements were met.

- Nutritious meals and snacks were served at regular times, but there was flexibility. Childrens snacks were observed in the playrooms and consisted of fruit, yogurts, sandwiches, cheese, milk or water.
- A water station was available in the playrooms for children to help themselves as required.
- The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- Perishable items were stored in the fridge belonging to children for snack times.
- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be independent by letting them take the lead in activities, dressing themselves for outdoor play, feeding themselves where appropriate and at toileting.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children’s ages and stages of development in the playrooms.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and were either independent at toileting or supported by adults as required.
- Twenty-six children were in nappies and nappies were changed by adults on a regular basis.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills. Children were observed washing hands after toileting, outdoor play, before snack time and after nappy changing.
- Pictures, word reminders and instructions displayed and used to support personal care and transitions throughout the day.
- There were 13 cots in total available in the 2 designated sleep rooms for children under 2 years of age and 23 sleep mats and sleep beds were available for children over the age of 2 years of age.
- All the children had opportunities to move about freely and explore their environment, both indoors and outdoors.
- A key person was assigned for each child to support their development and give feedback to parents, guardians in relation to their care and milestones. Feedback is given on their knowledge and observations of the child’s interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- Adults listened to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language. Childrens voices were recorded in the junior and senior preschool rooms and used to plan learning activities within the rooms.
- Adults documented children’s learning and development through the learning story method and a portfolio of children’s learning and activities was maintained in the junior and senior preschool rooms.
- Adults encouraged children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking. This was observed at circle time, table top activities and at artwork.

- Adults used a soft tone of voice, the child's individual name, and were observed getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- Children had the opportunity to partake in small and large group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
- Adults were observed to manage children's minor behavioural or disagreements in a positive way throughout the day.

### 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 entrance door into the pre-school was secure with a buzzer and keypad system to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play area was secured by fencing / gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area or children could not exit unsupervised.
- All cleaning agents and equipment were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Blinds cords were secured by fasteners and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.

##### Infection Control:

- There were three designated nappy changing areas with a clean intact changing mat.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled. The children's barrier creams were clearly individually labelled / stored within their designated nappy changing area.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.

- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.

### Safe Sleep:

- There were two designated sleep rooms with a total of 13 cots for children under 2 years of age and 23 sleep mats / beds for children over 2 years of age.

### Fire Safety:

- Staff maintained records of up-to-date fire safety training.
- The fire exit doors and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exit routes, and fire assembly points were readily identified with clear and illuminated signage.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. The practice in relation to the application of sunscreen was at variance with the service policy. The policy stated that sunscreen should be provided by the parents and individually labelled for each child. Adults informed inspectors that sunscreen is provided by the service and universally applied to all children. Adults stated that consent had been provided by parents however there was no evidence of this available on the day. Adults also stated that parents were not made aware of the brand and type of sunscreen used by the service. This practice poses a risk that a child may have an allergic reaction to the universal brand provided by the service.
2. The paint on the wooden surround of the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation off the senior preschool room was extensively chipped and therefore could not be adequately cleaned.

### Infection Control:

3. Self-sealing, leak proof, pedal bins were not used in the three nappy changing areas on the ground floor and may present as a risk of cross infection.
4. Pedal bins were broken in the junior and senior preschool rooms which may present as a risk of cross infection.
5. Sterilisers were not available in the baby and wobbler playrooms for the sterilisation of individual children's soothers.

### Administration of Medication:

- In conflict with the administration of medication policy of the service, adults stated that parents are not always contacted for the administration of unprescribed medication prior to each use. This may present as a safety hazard for a preschool child.

### Safe Sleep:

- The temperature in the designated sleep room off the wobbler room was recorded at 24.7 °C which may present as a safety hazard for a preschool child.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

- The permission sheet was not kept on file once all parents signed. Another sheet was created with the added information (date bought/expiry date/store purchased at/etc.). The policy has since been updated and newer staff have been informed of this.
- A gloss paint has been applied immediately after the inspection to rectify this. All staff are to inform room leaders and/or manager of resources/items that need attention.

#### Infection Control:

- Three nappy bins have been purchased to ensure the correct equipment is in all rooms.
- New pedal bins have been purchased for both rooms. Staff to inform room leader and/or manager if equipment/resources need fixed.
- Two new sterilisers were purchased instead of using the jug/microwave. Ensure the correct equipment is being used. Staff to inform room leader/manager if items are needed.

#### Administration of Medication:

- Newer staff members have been made aware of this. All parents are to be contacted before a child receives medication. To make sure newer staff are well informed of all policies. A sign has been put in each room just a gentle reminder.

#### Safe Sleep:

- The air conditioning system was ordered several months ago and we were awaiting the tradesmen to install it. This was connected the evening after our inspection. Try and obtain a tradesman to install items to prevent this happening again.

## Supporting documentation submitted

A number of images and receipts were submitted to evidence compliance.

## Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that all children were appropriately supervised, when attending the service. It was observed on the day that constant careful supervision by both sight and sound occurred to ensure children's safety. The adults were observed supervising children in the outdoor play areas, at toileting, in the playroom and at sleep time on sleep mats, beds and in the designated sleep rooms.