

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015DL080

Name of Service: Milford Community Playgroup Ltd

Address of Service: Unit 1, Forquar, Milford, Co. Donegal

Eircode: F92 RXW8

Name of Registered Provider: Jackie Strain

Service type: Sessional

Date(s) of Inspection: 04/06/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	No.
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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

Milford Community Playgroup Ltd is a pre-school service located in the town of Milford, Co. Donegal. The service is registered to provide sessional childcare to pre-school children aged 2 – 6 years between the hours of 9:00am and 12:00pm. The service operates from a building which has been purposely adapted for use as a pre-school. The premises has a lobby area leading into one large open-plan playroom. An office and storeroom are located directly off the playroom. A short corridor leads from the playroom to an enclosed outdoor play-area located on-site at the rear of the premises. The service's kitchen area and children's sanitary accommodation are also accessed off this corridor.

Staffing

On the day of inspection, there were six adults present in the service. This included the registered provider, three adults who were working directly with the children attending the preschool, and two adults employed under a CE scheme in auxiliary support roles.

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 9,11,19,23,25,27 and 28. However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. 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 registered provider, 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, six adults were present, the registered provider, three adults who were employed to work directly with the children, and two CE workers.

The following vetting information was available for six adults:

(a) Two written validated reference from past employers for one adult.

One written reference from a past employee for one adult.

(b) One written validated reference from reputable sources for two of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 6 staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the early year's 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 from the police authorities in another state was available for one adult who required it.

(4)
Four 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) Department of Children, meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) The following vetting information was not available:

(a) Eight written validated references from past employers for 5 adults.

There was no Identification on file for one adult that worked in the service.

(d) There were insufficient details on file for five adults to demonstrate the requirement or otherwise with regards to police vetting from other jurisdictions.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All information is now on file and will be inspected by management.

Supporting documentation submitted

ID for one staff member submitted.

Curriculum vitae submitted.

Reference submitted.

Summary Comment

The Early years inspector has assessed the response and deems information submitted to meet the requirement of this regulation.

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 the preschool children were in the service as evidenced in a sample review of attendance records.

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 (a)

- The indoor environment was thoughtfully designed to be comfortable, pleasant, and well-organized to meet the needs of the children attending the service. The distinct interest areas were equipped with a wide variety of play materials and equipment, effectively stimulating various aspects of a child's development.
- The children had access to a comprehensive selection of equipment, including threading exercises, peg board and sorting activities, small cars, and construction blocks, all of which supported cognitive and fine motor development. Additionally, children were observed engaging in sensory play activities, including the use of kinetic sand, play dough, and bubbles. The environment also featured a designated reading/rest area stocked with a variety of age-appropriate books, as well as a dress-up area that encouraged imaginative play.
- The pre-school room included a kitchen/home area furnished with child-sized furniture, large doll house with accessories and hair dressing area. There was also a large kitchen area equipped with child size washing machine, cooker and sink area. There was a large map where the children were observed playing with cars, trucks and lorries. There was a purpose-built post office and shop area along with a construction area and a farm set complete with a selection of farm animals.
- Children were observed playing together with cars, trucks and completing more focused activities like art, craft, pegs, and pins. The staff were observed sitting with the children and offering assistance as the children required. The children's artwork was displayed on the pre-school walls.
- The relaxation area consisted of child size soft chairs and cushioned area to facilitate rest throughout the day if required. Children were seen on the day of inspection after snack time lying down and playing in the rest area.

- There was ample space in the large playroom, allowing children to move freely and engage actively in their play. Observations indicated that play was predominantly self-directed, with children independently navigating and exploring the various interest areas.
- The service promoted healthy eating and food, and snacks were provided from home. On the morning of inspection, children were observed enjoying a range of healthy snacks such as yogurt, rolls, apples, strawberries and cucumber. There was drinking water provided in individual bottles that were left in the playroom for easy access for the preschool children throughout the session.
- The tables and chairs were appropriate for the stage and development of the children. Staff members were observed speaking with the children during snack time and using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction. Snack time was not rushed, and each child was given the time they needed to finish their snack.
- Children were observed using the toilet independently with adults in the room available to support if required. Appropriate hand washing practises were encouraged throughout the session before snack and after messy play.
- Staff were observed on the day of inspection responding to the children's needs appropriately, by getting down to their level, using soft tones, and making eye contact with them when they were speaking. Staff were observed to be responsive to the interactions of the children during play.
- During tabletop activities, some children were observed having trouble waiting for their turn to rotate to the next activity. In response, staff members provided gentle guidance, emphasizing the importance of turn-taking and sharing resources to support the development of social skills.
- Children were eased into different transitions of the day through; twinkle twinkle clean up your spot song and verbal prompts from the adults. It was evident from the children's behaviour that they were familiar with the normal routine of the day.
- Staff informed the inspector that outdoor play forms an integral part of the daily routine and children spend time each day engaged in physical play outdoors. The outdoor play area is fully covered, providing a sheltered environment that allows for continuous use in a variety of weather conditions. The play area was well equipped to include an artificial shock absorbent material, a large climbing frame, ride on bikes, picnic table, sand box with play equipment, mud kitchen, basketball hoop, chalk board with chalk available to the preschool children.

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 found to be secured on the morning of the unannounced inspection preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- The handle on internal doors in the main building were fitted out of reach of the child, preventing unauthorised exit from the rooms.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall fencing and a bolted gate.
- Grapes were observed to be cut, reducing the risk of choking to the child.
- All toys and play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, were observed to be safe for the pre-school children using them and in a good state of repair.
- Storage facilities were kept inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- Waste was inaccessible to the children both indoors and outdoors.
- Blind cords were secure to prevent risk of injury.
- Waste disposal facilities were inaccessible to the preschool children.
- There were no trailing flexes in the service.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- The tables were cleaned prior to snack time, and after the pre school children had finished their snack.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by openable windows.

- Staff were observed reminding children of the importance of hand washing at different intervals throughout the day.
- Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.
- Cleaning schedules were in place and maintained, staff were observed cleaning the pre-school room after the children had finished their snack.

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:

- A record of the monthly fire evacuation drills was displayed on the information notice board.
- All exits remained free from obstruction on the day.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1.
Garda vetting was available for all six adult's working in the service. However, four adult's vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

All staffs garda Vetting have been updated. All staff have a reminder on their phones for renewal date for Garda Vetting

Supporting documentation submitted

Renewal of garda vetting for five staff has been submitted.

Summary Comment

The Early years inspector has assessed the response and deems information submitted to meet the requirement of this regulation.

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 staff trained in FAR 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 02nd 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 and the fire detection system.

was dated 10th February 2025.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were displayed in a conspicuous position at the two exit doors in the pre-school room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance for the number of children in attendance. The insurance certificate was observed to be valid until 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

Non-Compliance Information

(e) On the day of the inspection, adult sanitary facilities were not accessible to staff working in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Toilet facilities are now provided in the adjoining building, with landlord approval for adult sanitary use.

Supporting documentation submitted

Letter from landlord of the building confirming use of the attached toilet for adult use.

Summary Comment

The Early years inspector has assessed the response and deems information submitted to meet the requirement of this regulation.