

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL083
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Name of Service:	Naíonra an Choimin
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Address of Service:	Scoil Náisiúnta An Choimín, An Choimín, Leifearr, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 CF67
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ray Mac Pháidín
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	8
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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	Non-Applicable
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Description of service

The preschool service, naíonra an choimín, is located within the school premises of scoil náisiúnta an choimín in County Donegal. The service is registered to provide sessional and part-time service for children aged between 2 and 6 years and operates from 8:50 to 14:00 each weekday. The premises includes a large playroom, separate sanitary facilities for children, an enclosed outdoor play area directly accessible from the playroom, and storage facilities.

Staffing

On the day of inspection, four staff members were employed in the service. This includes one service manager and three staff members assigned to work directly with the children. Two staff members were present during the inspection, including the service manager, who was working directly with the children. The registered provider is not based on the premises on a daily basis.

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 9,11,19,23,25,26,27 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

(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.

(2)

On the day of inspection, two adults were present, the person in charge and one adult who were employed to work directly with the children.

The following vetting information was available for four adults:

(a) Eight written validated references from past employers for four of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(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) 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)
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 always maintained throughout the inspection.

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

Physical and Material Environment:

- The indoor environment was safe, welcoming, and developmentally appropriate. Materials were well-organised and easily accessible, allowing children to make independent choices and engage in self-directed play.
- The main preschool room was well-equipped to meet the developmental needs of the children. It included child-sized tables and chairs, rest area with soft child size chairs and teddies and wooden playhouse, and a home kitchen area featuring a child-sized cooker, sink, and oven. There was a dedicated art area, a library corner, and a “My Family Tree” photo display to promote a sense of belonging. Open shelves housed a wide variety of toys including Jenga blocks, zoo animals, ponies, cars, tractors, wooden furniture, and a large selection of puzzles, all accessible at child height to encourage independent play.

- On the day of inspection, children were seen choosing their own play materials and engaging in collaborative play. Staff encouraged kindness and cooperation, as demonstrated when a child was invited to help a peer complete a jigsaw puzzle. Children were consistently supported to express themselves, take initiative, and engage meaningfully with their environment. Turn-taking and sharing were naturally embedded in the play, with staff reinforcing these behaviours through gentle guidance and praise.
- All the play educational resources were accessible to the children at their height. Appropriate size tables and chairs were located near interest areas to provide children with a choice of tabletop activities or floor play.
- Rest areas were thoughtfully arranged to support children's comfort and need for downtime. These spaces included large floor cushions, child-sized chairs, and soft matting, creating a calming environment where children could relax during the day. Stackable beds were also available, and children were observed spending time resting on them after lunch and energetic play. During this time, they watched a colourful projection on the ceiling while practising breathing exercises with staff members, further promoting relaxation and emotional regulation.
- The service had one outdoor play area located to the rear of the building, which featured a large shock-absorbent ground covering around the climbing frames. A large wooden treehouse with a climbing frame, slide, and swings was available for the preschool children. The broader outdoor space also included ride-on bikes, a plastic treehouse, numerous small tractors and bikes, a sand pit for sensory input, a mud kitchen, and a heightened flower and vegetable bed. These areas were accessible to the children and provided a good variety of activities to support gross motor development, energetic play, imaginative play, sensory exploration, and an introduction to nature and gardening.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The same staff members were present each day in the service which ensured that the children were familiar with the adults caring for them. Staff interactions with children were consistently warm, responsive, and respectful. Children were given opportunities to form secure relationships with familiar adults. This approach helped build trust and continuity of care, and staff were observed communicating regularly with parents at collection.
- On the day of inspection, children were seen choosing their own play materials and engaging in collaborative play. Staff encouraged kindness and cooperation. Children were consistently supported to express themselves, take initiative, and engage meaningfully with their environment.

- Good teamwork was observed, and staff worked well together and were observed communicating with each other and shared the workload between them.
- Children were offered a sense of belonging through the provision of individually named places for their personal belongings and by displays of artwork and photos of each child with their families.
- Children were enabled to engage positively with each other and were encouraged to be helpful, to take turns and share play resources with other children.
- Children's language, development and communication skills were supported through the positive interactions an ongoing conversation observed during the session and throughout storytelling, music and nursery rhymes that formed part of their play routine.
- Children were regularly praised and encouraged throughout the morning which helped them to be confident and willing to communicate their ideas and to ask questions.

Needs of the infant and children

- There were adequate food and drink available, with parents supplying the snacks for their children. On the day of inspection, children's snacks included cheese sandwiches, cucumber, crackers, bananas, raspberries, grapes, and blueberries. An additional water station was available to the preschool children in the room. Information was also displayed on the notice board highlighting the sugar content in various foods, including a physical representation of the amount of sugar contained in some common items, helping to raise awareness among children and parents.
- Children access the toilet during the session in accordance with their individual needs. Good general hygiene practises were observed, and staff supervise children when they washed their hands to ensure that this was effectively carried out.
- Tissues were provided for runny noses etc. and parents applied spare clothes. Protective plastic aprons were available for messy play thereby promoting personal care.
- Free movement of the children was facilitated in the daily routine of the service short periods of adult initiated activities was interspersed with free play where children could choose their own activity and move between the different interest areas in the room.
- children were supported and encouraged to be independent suitable to their age and stage of development, including self-feeding, toileting, dressing for home and tidying away after work or play activities.

- Staff transitions between activities were calm and well-managed, with children given advance notice and supported through familiar routines. Visual cues and songs were used to signal changes, helping children feel secure and prepared.

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 arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- Waste was inaccessible to the children both indoors and outdoors.
- 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 wooden fencing and a bolted gate.
- Storage facilities were kept inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All toys and play equipment, were observed to be safe for the pre-school children using them and in a good state of repair.
- Grapes were observed to be cut in half, reducing the risk of choking to the child.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation.
- The pre-school room were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.
- The tables were cleaned prior to snack time, with foods served to children on suitable plates.
- A refrigerator was available and utilised for the storage of perishable snacks and meals.
- Foot operated Pedal bins which were available in the pre-school room and sanitary area.

- Soap was readily available to children to wash their hands prior to eating, after both toileting and outdoor play. 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:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care room.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 1 staff member. However, this vetting disclosure 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'.

Administration of Medication:

2. The anti-fever medication was stored in a fridge located in the main playroom, where it was accessible to the preschool children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The staff member that had not their Vetting in date, was a substitute staff member and not working in the service, an application had been made and a new vetting obtained from the vetting bureau and provided to the inspectorate after her visit of the service. We will ensure that up to date copies will be provided on site in future. Unfortunately, as the process of new up dated vetting had taken place an up dated copy was not provided on site. Ensure up to date vetting's are completed in the summer to ensure available on site for inspection whilst in operation.

Administration of Medication:

2. The medication was removed immediately and stored in a secure box high out of reach of the children during the inspection process to ensure the safety of the children. All medication will be stored in a secure locked box out of reach of the children in the service at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Updated garda vetting for the substitute staff was sent in for review.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was removed on the day of inspection and locked away securely.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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 procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 02nd of September 2025.
- (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file last serviced 13/08/2025.
- (4)
- Notices of the evacuation procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the room.

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

- On the day of inspection, children were appropriately always supervised by staff who were actively engaged and positioned to see and hear all children in their care.
- Transitions between activities, rest periods, and mealtimes were well-managed, ensuring children were never left unattended.

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 from 27/11/2024 up until 27/11/2025.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School