

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL100				
Name of Service:	Naíonra Mhuire Chill Chartha				
Address of Service:	Naíonra Mhuire, Kilcar, Co. Donegal				
Eircode:	N/A				
Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Love				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date(s) of Inspection:	05/06/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>19</td> <td>PM</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	AM	19	PM	-
AM	19	PM	-		

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
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

Naíonra Mhuire Chill Chartha is a pre-school service located on the outskirts of Kilcar (Chill Chartha), a gaeltacht village in southwest Donegal. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and is registered to offer sessional childcare provision catering for pre-school children aged from 2 - 6 years. Care and education are provided using a play-based pedagogy and the natural use of the Irish language is promoted within the service. The pre-school is situated within Scoil Chartha Naofa, a local primary school. The service occupies one large room to the rear of the school. The room has sanitary accommodation located en-suite to the playroom for children's use with adult facilities adjacent to the playroom. The children also have access to a sensory room which is located in the main school. A small enclosed outdoor play area directly accessible from the premises has been provided for exclusive use by the pre-school service.

Staffing

The service employs a total of five staff members, including the manager. The manager, who also serves as the designated person in charge, was present during the unannounced inspection. On the day of the inspection, four staff members were present. The person in charge and three adults working directly with the preschool children. The register provider does not work in the service.

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 announced/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 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 of a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 7 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

(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 the inspection, four adults were present: the person in charge and three staff members employed to work directly with the children.

The following vetting information was available for five adults:

- (a) Eight written validated references from past employers for five of the adults.
- (b) Two written validated references from reputable sources for two of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for five 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 one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4)

Five 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, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) 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 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

1 (a)

Physical and Material Environment

- The playroom was warm and welcoming, offering a suitable and engaging environment for preschool children. It was thoughtfully arranged into clearly defined interest areas, which the children actively explored throughout the session.
- Resources were easily accessible, and children confidently navigated the space, independently selecting toys, equipment, and materials—demonstrating familiarity and comfort within their environment.
- The room’s layout provided ample space for children to move freely between interest areas. This design supported both independent exploration and effective staff supervision.
- Age-appropriate furnishings, including low-level tables and chairs, were available to support snack time and tabletop activities. The preschool room featured a diverse range of interest areas, such as a home/kitchen corner, a doll and baby-care area, a playhouse, a tool/workbench, a hairdressing station, and a selection of transport-themed toys.
- Children had access to a fully equipped sensory room, which included soft furnishings, bean bags, a bubble tube, projector lighting, and calming music—creating a relaxing and multi-sensory environment.
- The construction area offered a variety of materials that supported the development of both gross and fine motor skills. Large blocks and open-ended resources encouraged imaginative thinking and creative play.
- Wall displays featured a photo board showcasing children engaged in various activities, along with a dedicated space for displaying current artwork—celebrating children's creativity and achievements.
- The outdoor area provided a wide range of activities to support gross motor development. It offered ample space for energetic play, imaginative exploration, and interaction with the natural environment. The area was securely enclosed with perimeter fencing and gates to ensure safety.
- Children spent a significant portion of their session outdoors, engaging with well-designed interest areas such as a wooden climbing frame, a large dollhouse, oversized chalk and painting boards, a spacious sand area, a mud kitchen, and raised flower beds for hands-on planting experiences.
- Additionally, children had access to the astro turf pitch on the school grounds, further enhancing opportunities for physical activity and outdoor play

Basic needs

- Adequate food and drink were available for the preschool children on the day of the inspection. Food was provided by parents, and the service promoted healthy choices through its healthy eating policy. Snacks observed included wraps, ham sandwiches, fruit, cheese, and yoghurt.
- Children’s lunches were stored appropriately in a refrigerator located in the main preschool room. Drinking water was accessible throughout the session, with children observed independently helping themselves as needed.
- Children accessed toilet facilities in accordance with their individual needs. Child-friendly handwashing posters were displayed to promote proper hygiene practices. Staff supervised handwashing to ensure it was carried out effectively.
- Tissues were readily available for personal hygiene, and spare clothing was provided when necessary. Protective aprons were used during messy play activities to support cleanliness and personal care.
- The daily routine allowed for free movement, with short periods of adult-led activities balanced by opportunities for child-initiated play. Children were encouraged to choose their own activities and move freely between interest areas.
- Independence was actively promoted in line with each child’s age and stage of development. Children were supported in self-feeding, toileting, dressing, and tidying up after activities.
- Rest needs were appropriately accommodated. A quiet corner with child-sized couches was available during free play for children who needed a break.
- The sensory room was used daily under staff supervision, providing a calming space for regulation and relaxation.
- Staff employed positive behaviour guidance strategies and encouraged children to resolve minor conflicts independently, fostering social and emotional development.

Supporting relationships around children:

- A consistent team of staff members was present each day, fostering a stable and secure environment in which children could develop trusting relationships.
- Staff demonstrated a warm, attentive, and professional approach in their interactions with the children. They engaged at the children’s level, maintained ongoing dialogue throughout the session, and ensured that each child felt heard and valued. Positive reinforcement was consistently provided, and individual support was offered as children participated in various activities.

- Strong teamwork was evident among the staff. They collaborated effectively, demonstrated clear awareness of their individual roles and responsibilities, and worked cohesively to support the needs and well-being of the children in the pre-school.
- A key working system was in place within the preschool, with each staff member assigned to specific children. Staff were responsible for completing individual observations and maintaining learning records, supporting a personalised approach to each child's development.
- A strong sense of belonging was fostered through the use of individually labelled spaces for children's personal belongings, as well as displays of their artwork and photographs featuring each child with their family members.
- Positive peer interactions were actively encouraged. Children were supported in developing social skills such as cooperation, turn-taking, and sharing of resources during play.
- Children's language development and communication skills were effectively supported through consistent, meaningful interactions with staff. Ongoing conversations were observed throughout the session, alongside structured activities such as storytelling, music, and nursery rhymes. The use of changing curriculum themes further enriched vocabulary development and provided opportunities for children to expand their language in context.
- Parents were actively encouraged to participate in the preschool curriculum by sharing their professions and trades with the children. Visitors included a member of An Garda Síochána, a nurse, and a beekeeper, each of whom engaged with the children to explain their roles and responsibilities in the community.
- Throughout the morning, children were consistently praised and encouraged, which contributed to the development of their confidence and willingness to express ideas and ask questions.
- Several preschool children are preparing to transition to primary school in September. Staff have undertaken comprehensive measures to support this transition. Activities included a visit from the children's future primary school teacher and daily visits by the children to their new classroom environment. Additionally, staff shared with the inspector a personalised picture book for the children, visually outlining their individual transition plan to help them feel prepared and confident about the upcoming change.

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:

- Thermostatically controlled warm running water, liquid soap, and paper hand towels were available in the sanitary facilities.
- Materials and resources throughout the service appeared visually clean and well-maintained.
- Tables were cleaned both before and after snack time to maintain hygiene standards.
- Foot-operated pedal bins were provided for the safe and hygienic disposal of waste.
- Sanitary facilities were mechanically ventilated, supporting good air circulation and hygiene.
- Staff consistently reminded children of the importance of handwashing at various points throughout the day.
- Child-friendly handwashing posters were displayed beside sinks, and handwashing was supervised to ensure it was carried out effectively.
- A cleaning schedule was in place and actively followed. Staff were observed cleaning the preschool room promptly after snack time.

Administration of Medication:

- During the inspection, staff demonstrated awareness of their responsibilities regarding the safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of the 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.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
- (b) an employee, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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.