

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL137
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Name of Service:	The Doorway Project 2 Community Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	No 6 Meadowbank, Long Lane, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 T9CX
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ester MacElhinney
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	21/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	N/A
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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:	L Costello
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

The Doorway Project 2 Community Childcare Centre is a not-for-profit sessional preschool service offering a morning and afternoon session. The service runs from 09.00am -12.00pm each weekday and cares for children aged 2-6 years. A school age service is also provided. The service participates on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

Staffing

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. There are three adults employed to work with the children on a daily basis, three of these hold at a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16k, 19, 23, 25, 26, 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 20. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 (k) accident and incident records.

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, 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*

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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)(b)

There was a person in charge and a person able to deputise as required. The person in charge remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2) (a) (b)

It was confirmed that three adults are employed in the service and all three adult files were reviewed.

Six written and verified past employer references and one written validated reference from a source other than a past employer were available for review.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for three staff.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was in place for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of more than six consecutive months.

(4)

Three adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, 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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There was one adult working directly with ten children in the morning. There was an additional staff member available to cover or provide assistance as required throughout the session.
- (2)
- The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*
- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
 - (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
 - (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
 - (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*

(e) authorisation for the collection of the child;

(f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;

(g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(2) A registered provider of a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the particulars specified in subparagraphs (a), (d), (e) and (f) of paragraph (1).

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and

(c) an authorised person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

1) (a-g)

Ten records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3) (a)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year's inspector.

(4)

The person in charge confirmed that the records are retained for the required period as set out in the regulations

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (i)

Two children did not have the required consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

The required consent for medical treatment for each child has been signed by the parents of the children. An enrolment checklist has been completed to ensure that this is completed for all children going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Enrolment checklist submitted.
- Medical consent submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider has been accepted and this regulation is now complaint.

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) (b)

Basic needs:

- Children were observed to bring in their snacks from home, and this consisted of a variety of healthy food options including fruit, yoghurts, cheese and crackers and a variety of sandwiches.
- The service had a healthy eating policy in place and parents were encouraged to support their children in healthy lunch choices.

- Independence was promoted and children were encouraged to go to the bathroom alone while the adult prompted from a distance offering support if required.
- Waterproof clothing and wellies were provided for outdoor play in inclement weather.

Supporting Relationships:

- The service took measures to support transitions from home to the service. On the day a parent of a new child was present in the service facilitating an effective transition.
- Many of the children attending the preschool do not have English as a first language and the staff members were observed to be mindful and inclusive in their interactions, speaking slowly to ensure all children understood.
- The staff member demonstrated a good knowledge of the children's needs on discussion with the inspector, identifying where additional support was required and measures taken by the service to address this.
- The staff member was observed to be kind in her approach and the children appeared content in the company of staff and children.

Curriculum

- Evidence of curriculum planning was available with individual observations recorded for each child.
- The service was participating in road safety week, and a member of the road safety authority was present during the session to demonstrate and inform the children all about road safety in a fun interactive way.
- The service demonstrated that the observations are recorded for all preschool children, and these observations create the learning goals to be achieved through the course of the programme.

Physical Materials.

- The service wall was colourfully decorated with murals of various cartoon characters creating an environment of warmth and fun.
- The service had a variety of wooden toys including kitchens and construction areas to create opportunities for imaginative play.
- Low level accessible shelving equipped with arts and crafts and tabletop activities allowed for children to direct their own sense of play.

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 service was secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service.
- The outdoor perimeter consisted of high-level block fencing and wooden gates which was observed to be secure on the day.
- Waste was out of reach of the preschool child.
- Bilind chords and flexes were secure.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to wash hands prior to mealtimes and after messy play.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation doors remained free from obstruction on the day of inspection.
- Assembly points were clearly displayed to the front of the car park in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The cleaning cupboard stocked with disinfectant fluid was not locked on the day of inspection and therefore accessible to preschool children.
2. The outdoor area had a large pool of stagnant water which could pose a risk of drowning to the preschool child. This non-compliance was identified on a previous inspection in XXXX and the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider failed to prevent a recurrence.

Infection Control:

3. Water temperatures measured on the day in all sinks were recorded at 13.0°C which is not warm enough for effective hand hygiene.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

In a written response the registered provider stated:

1. The disinfectant fluid has been removed and put in the locked cleaning press separate from the pre-school room that children cannot access.
2. The pool of water has been removed, the area has been aerated, levelled, and sand and stone put on top, and a covering of garden bark added on top. This will be monitored daily.

Infection Control:

3. The water heater in the pre-school room at the time of the inspection was not switched on which resulted in the water being cold, the switch was immediately switched on. These are thermostatically controlled. We have purchased a digital water thermometer, and the water temperature will be checked regularly to ensure that it is at the required temperature.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

3. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider has been accepted by the inspectorate and this regulation is now compliant.

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)
The registered provider demonstrated that one adult trained in first aid for children was available to the preschool children during the operation of the service.
- (2) (a) (b)
A suitably stocked first aid box is stored in a location that is accessible to the preschool children as required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had adequate certification of insurance for a sessional service for 22 children up until the 10th of September 2026.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) *Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (b) *there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night*

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (b)
The registered provider did not provide a comfortable rest area for the children to rest or take a break from an activity.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:
A comfortable rest area has been put in place for the children to rest or take a break from an activity.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographic evidence submitted.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate. This regulation is now compliant.