

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015DL138

Name of Service: Glen Outdoor

Address of Service: Barrack, Newmills, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

Eircode: F92 YR68

Name of Registered Provider: Orla McDaid

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date(s) of Inspection: 30/04/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	27
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Donegal Early Years Inspectorate,
St. Conal's Campus,
Letterkenny,
Co. Donegal.
F92 TD92

Inspection undertaken by: L McGlynn

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

Description of service

Glen outdoor school is a privately owned and operated full day care service located in the rural townland of Glenswilly on the outskirts of Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. The service operates an outdoor based curriculum model for children aged 0-6 years and operates from 7.50am to 5.30pm. The service is also registered to provide school age care.

The premises consists of a purpose adapted dormer building with one indoor playroom, a kitchen, dining room, two sleep rooms and sanitary and laundry facilities. The service operates predominantly from a spacious outdoor area which surrounds the building on three sides and contains a range of sheltered areas including two polytunnels, a large wooden Tepee, a wooden play house and a smaller building with two indoor rooms.

Staffing

There were 10 staff members employed to work in the service. The registered provider is on the premises on a daily basis and works directly with the children. In addition to the registered provider, there were five staff members working with the preschool children and two adults in the service on educational placement. One staff member worked solely with school age children and one staff member was employed to work in the kitchen.

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

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

(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

(2) At the time of inspection, the registered provider confirmed that there were 10 staff members who worked in the service. Two of these staff members had commenced working in the service since the previous inspection. A review of records demonstrated that the vetting documentation for eight 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 two newly recruited staff members were reviewed and the following information was available:

- (a) (b) Two references from past employers, in particular the most recent past employer was on file for one staff member. One past employer reference was on file for one staff member.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the two staff members. 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 from the relevant state was available for the one staff member who required it.

(4) Documentary evidence was presented to demonstrate that one staff member had obtained a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework and the second staff member had obtained a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) The reference from a past employer for one staff member did not correspond with the recorded employment history submitted by the employee. This employment was not mentioned in their history of past employments.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) Management spoke to the employee regarding missing reference, it was added onto the CV. Going forward management will ensure when ringing references to make sure it is noted in employees CV also.

Supporting documentation submitted

An updated curriculum vitae was submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has been accepted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (a) has 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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2) The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. On the inspector's arrival at the service, 35 children were being cared for by six adults in the outdoor area. There were 16 children aged 1-2 years and 19 children aged 2-4 years. Eight of the children attended on a sessional basis and the remaining 27 attended on a full time/part time basis.
- There were two additional adults in the service on educational placement.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
 - (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

- (h) There was a mechanism in place for recording children's attendance on a daily basis.

Non-Compliance Information

- (i) A written record of the details of staff rosters was unavailable when requested by the inspector. The inspector requested a copy of the planned roster for the current week. The registered provider stated that staff work the same hours every week.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (i) A roster has been done up one month in advance. By having rota done one month in advance, it will ensure no week is missed.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the monthly roster was submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has been accepted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 (1) (i) has been adequately addressed.

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

The service operates primarily outdoors, and children had access to an extensive outdoor play area on site.

Named staff were assigned to specific groups of children and a keyworker system was in operation. The older children aged over two years had access to the larger section and the younger children were cared for in a smaller section of the outdoor area and in a designated indoor care room.

Meals and snacks were prepared on site in the service kitchen and there was a menu plan available. The morning snack consisted of brown soda bread and fruit. At midday, a hot meal of chicken fajitas, potato wedges and pasta were provided with milk and water to drink. An afternoon snack of fruit and sandwiches was planned for later in the day. The main hot meal was served to children indoors in the dining area where appropriate height tables and low-level chairs or highchairs were provided for children to sit in a comfortable position to master the skill of self-feeding. Appropriate cutlery and crockery were provided and children appeared competent in their feeding ability

with staff providing assistance only when required. Older children were encouraged to be independent in pouring their own drink of water when outdoors and a flask of water with cups was positioned at child height.

Younger children had their nappies changed on a scheduled basis and more frequently if required. Interactions between staff and children were observed to be respectful with staff communicating positively throughout nappy changing procedures. Older children who were toilet-trained were encouraged and supported to be independent in their toileting needs with staff providing assistance as necessary. Sanitary accommodation was available in the outdoor area providing easy access.

Storage was available for each child's belongings which included a change of clothes and a range of all-weather outdoor gear including waterproof rain gear, wellingtons and sun hats. The weather was particularly sunny on the day and staff were observed applying sun cream, removing heavy clothes and retrieving sun hats for children. Children were observed to be placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest in the afternoon and there were two indoor rooms used for sleep.

Children's mobility was supported through the large outdoor space available for free movement. A range of equipment and resources was available in the areas to enhance children's gross motor development including ride on toys, climbing toys and stable props for the younger learner walker.

The staff demonstrated sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for the children through the use of language, speaking in soft tones using children's individual names, making eye-contact and positioning themselves at the children's level during interactions. During periods of direct care, staff were observed to engage children in one-to-one interactions and natural reciprocal conversations about their home and family life. There was an electronic application used by staff to provide feedback to parents on their child's care and daily routine in the service. Staff recorded information on each child's eating, sleeping and care routines. The system was also used to periodically send observations to parents on their child learning and development.

There was a large outdoor area surrounding the main building which featured a variety of play opportunities. The area to the left of the building featured sloping grass covered garden with maturing trees and interconnecting branches creating small tunnels for children to walk through. A group of children spent considerable time in this area with a tyre swing using it as a prop for running games. The children also took great pride in showing the inspector around the space and naming areas of interest such as the 'stage' and a wooden playhouse along with

the new lambs and cows that were visible from the play area in the neighbouring fields. The area in the centre of the play area housed a large wooden teepee, ride on toys, picnic benches and a polytunnel laid out as an indoor classroom. A second polytunnel contained sand and a range of play items used for digging. Both polytunnels were close off from use on the day due to the hot weather. The area to the right of the building was grass covered, and housed climb and slide units and wooden play items. There were opportunities throughout the outdoor area for children to engage in gross motor physical play, imaginary and sensory play. Children’s fine motor development was supported with jigsaws and shape sorters. Reading materials were available both indoors and in the polytunnel and the sand/water/natural environment provided a variety of multi-sensory experiences.

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 to the premises including the play area was secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and visitor access was controlled by secure gates.
- Cleaning products were securely stored so as to be inaccessible to the preschool children and the kitchen which contained cooking facilities and hazardous items was not accessible to the children.
- The play equipment and resources in the outdoor area were well maintained and suitable for the age of children using them.
- A detailed risk assessment was available to view on the play equipment, resources and areas within the service.
- Gates leading to unsecured, hazardous areas were secured.
- Staff took necessary precautions and closed off both polytunnels preventing children from entering due to the elevated temperatures caused by the hot weather.

Infection Control:

- Nappy changing processes were observed and noted to adhere to appropriate infection control guidance.
- Foot pedal operated bins were in use throughout the indoor and outdoor areas.
- There was a fridge in the outdoor area which was used to store children’s snacks brought from home.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff members demonstrated through discussion that they were aware of the correct procedures to be followed in relation to the administration of medication. The staff were observed to apply suncream supplied by the service to the children at regular intervals during the day which was very warm and sunny.

Safe Sleep:

- There were eight standard cots containing mattresses with safety marks provided in the separate sleep room located in the main building. A second sleep room used for older children contained one cot. All children aged under 2 years when resting/sleeping used a standard cot. The air temperature in the sleep room while children slept was noted to be within the require safe range.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exit routes were found to be unobstructed during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Two of the posts holding the boundary fence at the bottom of the play aera were loose and in need of repair to prevent them falling and causing a gap which children may pass through.
2. Records detailing the attendance of each preschool child were not maintained accurately in relation to children's arrival and departure time to and from the service. A review of the attendance records at 12.50pm demonstrated that three children had not been signed out on departure and two children were not signed in as present in the service. This poses a risk that children may be unaccounted for in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Infection Control:

3. There was no warm water for adequate handwashing in the children's wash hand basins outdoors. The temperature recorded was 12.9°C, 12.5°C and 13.0°C which is inadequate for effective hand washing. This is a recurring non-compliance from the previous inspection on 8 October 2024.
4. There was no waterproof covering on two of the cot mattresses used for children's sleep.
5. While it is acknowledged that there were individual storage boxes for children's soothers, there was one soother in a cot which was not stored in a clean, hygienic condition prior to use.

Safe Sleep:

6. While it is acknowledged that staff were observed carrying out physical checks on sleeping children at no more than 10-minute intervals, the records maintained did not adequately detail the check having taken

place. Staff recorded the time the child was placed to sleep and the time they wakened up. The record then stated that the child *'was checked every 10 minutes and their colour, breathing and position was...'*

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. More posts were added on to the fence to ensure stability. The back fence was added to our daily risk sheet, to make sure it checked daily.
2. All staff were reminded to check children in and out as they arrive and leave. Each staff now has their own tablet to view and update records. Management will call through every morning on walkie talkies to remind staff about checking in/out.

Infection Control:

3. The boiler was serviced and the temperature will be checked regularly. The boiler will be serviced regularly.
4. All staff were reminded when making beds, to ensure a mattress protector and sheet is on. Extra bedding was purchased to have an overflow.
5. Instead of leaving the dummy in the bed as comes in and out daily staff will make sure its stored in container the same as everyone else's. Management will check in mornings to make sure the dummy is stored away correctly.

Safe Sleep:

6. A sleep record book was purchased and is now being used alongside the app.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Images were submitted to demonstrate compliance.

Infection Control:

Images and purchase receipts were submitted.

Safe Sleep:

A copy of the sleep record book detailing 10-minute sleep checks was submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has been accepted. 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

On the day of the inspection, the correct adult to child ratio was maintained in line with the requirements of the regulations. Staff were observed to supervise children by sight and sound, except for occasions where children were independently using the sanitary facilities or in some of the designed spaces for hiding such as the small willow tunnels or wooden playhouses. In discussion with inspectors, staff members spoke about the necessity of providing close supervision to all children, particularly when outdoors and discussed the strategy used by staff whereby one person is positioned in each of the main play spaces. One staff member also remained indoors with sleeping children.