

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY022
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Name of Service:	Ballyconneely Community Playschool
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Address of Service:	Ballyconneely, Clifden, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H71 NC59
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tom McWilliams
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A- (1st Floor-Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
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

This community pre-school first registered in 1997 and is located to the rear of the local community centre in the village of Ballyconneely, county Galway. This service offers an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme and a sessional care programme from 09.30 to 12.30 Monday to Friday. The service is registered for pre-school children aged 2 to 6 years. The service has a playroom, sanitary facilities and a kitchenette. There is a play area to the front and the side of the service for children to explore, play and get fresh air.

Staffing

There is a named person in charge and named deputy person in charge if required. The person in charge was present and 2 adults who worked directly with the children were present on the morning of the inspection. There are a total of 3 adults currently working in the premises with a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of a Level 5 to a level 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going training 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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.

(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)(a) The manager was the person in charge and there was a person available to deputise as required.

- (b) The designated person in charge and the person who was assigned as deputy were available on the day of inspection.

All 3 adult files were reviewed:

(2)(a) Five of the required 6 references were sourced from past employers and validated.

- (b) One of the 6 required references were obtained from a source other than a past employer and validated.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the three adults working in the service.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years.

- (d) International police vetting was required and available, for an adult who had lived in 2 other states for a period longer than 6 months as an adult.

(4) The staff working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the day of inspection.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to.
There were 3 adults working directly with 13 preschool children.

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(1)(a)

Basic Needs

- The snacks supplied by the parents were healthy and nutritious and consisted of sandwiches, crackers, cheese, fresh fruit pieces, yogurts with milk or water available to children when needed.
- Perishable food items were stored in the service fridge.

- Crockery and plates were offered and used during children's snack times and were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- Children attending the service were toilet trained and toileted independently or with some assistance or support by adults as required.
- Children's self-care was encouraged by adults for e.g., to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting and after messy play.
- In the playroom the children had the opportunity to rest or relax on soft seating in a designated cosy area.
- Communication with parents was at drop off and collection, meetings and by phone or email.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by adults, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children were shown positive strategies to manage their behaviour during the session. When a minor dispute arose over a toy the adults helped both children to find a positive outcome.
- Children were encouraged to take turns while playing in large and small groups.
- There was an outdoor play area at the front and side of the premises which were sufficiently spacious to accommodate the numbers of children attending the service.
- The play equipment and materials provided in the outdoor area supported a range of physically energetic activities and play experiences.
- All children were observed playing in the outdoor area in the clearly defined interest areas.
- Children were observed playing in the special interest areas, doing table top activities, at circle time, playing with sand and riding the tricycles.
- The themes of the week were 'Father's Day and Summer'.

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) Two adults working directly with the preschool children had first aid responder training (FAR) and were available to the children during the hours of operation of the preschool service.
- (2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in the playroom.
- (b) First aid supplies were available and in date in the playroom for use by the adults in the event of an emergency with the preschool children.

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-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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 record in writing of fire drills indicated that the last fire drill was conducted on the 12 May 2025.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that firefighting equipment was checked annually. Records confirmed that the firefighting equipment was serviced on the 14 November 2024 and the fire detection and smoke alarms were maintained annually, the last date of maintenance was on the 14 November 2024.
- (2)(c) The fire records required in paragraph (1) were available for review in the service.

- (4) The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be conducted in the event of a fire was available on file and displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had evidence of in date insurance for a sessional service for 22 preschool children and was valid until the 27 March 2026.