

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015GY098
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Galway Steiner Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Na Blatha Craige, Clybaun Road, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway
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<b>Eircode:</b>	H91 C5D4
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Shane O'Connor
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	19/09/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	15	PM	12
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E. Friel
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

Galway Steiner Childcare is a private setting providing a choice of part-time and sessional services through a Steiner and play based curriculum. It has been in operation since 2012 and it is registered to cater for children aged 2 to 6 years. Daily opening hours are from 09.00 to 14.00, this includes a sessional service from 09.00 to 12.00 which is available 38 weeks of the year.

The service is in a residential housing estate in Knocknacarra, Galway city. It comprises of one interconnected care room, adult and children's sanitary accommodation, a kitchen, staff room, storage rooms, a reception area and a boot room. A secure outdoor play area is situated to the rear of the building and is accessible from the care room.

### Staffing

There are 3 adults available to work with the children; 2 of whom were working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The registered 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 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.

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.

## Additional Information

19/09/2025

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider onsite in relation to non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

22/09/2025

A response to the IAN was subsequently received on 22/09/2025. The photographic and documented evidence submitted by the registered provider were accepted in mitigating the safety risks to the children in the service.

## 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 on commencement of the unannounced inspection. A named person was available to deputise as required.
  - (b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. The manager assisted with the administrative requirements of the inspection while working directly with the children in the service. Documentary evidence in the form of a staff roster indicated that both the person in charge and the second person was available, on the premises,

while the early years children were in the service.

(2) Recruitment files for all 4 adults were reviewed:

- (a) Four of the required 8 written and validated references were available from a past employer.
  - (b) The remaining 4 written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.
  - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 4 adults working in the service, demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years.
  - (d) Police vetting disclosures were available for 2 of 3 adults that had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.
- (4) There was evidence that 2 of the 3 adults who required a childcare qualification had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent. The one remaining adult that did not have the required qualification had a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)

- (d) Overseas police vetting could not be assessed for 1 adult as there was no translation into English by an official translation company posing a potential safety risk to the children.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

- (2)
- (d) Overseas police vetting, with official translation, is now available on file for the adult for whom it was required. In future all necessary documentation in regard to paragraph (2) will be in place prior any adult having contact with or access to the children.

### Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (d) A copy of the translated overseas police vetting was received in the office of the inspectorate. In addition, the statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

### Summary Comment

The actions and evidence received from the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (d).

### 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) There were an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children while they were on the premises.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were met. There were 2 adults working directly with 15 children in the morning and 12 children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) The sign in/sign out records of the adults indicated that the service operated with at least 2 adults while the early years children were present in the service.

## 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

##### Basic needs:

- The children were observed accessing the toilets independently and with assistance when required.
- The weather on the day of inspection was changeable. Children were noted to be dressed in their waterproofs and wellington boots ensuring they were dry and comfortable while playing in the outdoor play area.
- Spare clothes were available in the event of an accident.

##### Supporting children's relationships:

- Children were supported and encouraged by the adults to engage positively with each other in play activities which required turn taking and sharing in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The adults fostered independence and were observed supporting and assisting the children to take off and hang up their outdoor clothing when returning indoors and to put on their slippers, to tidy up areas before transitioning to new activities, pour water for themselves and to wash up after mealtimes assisted by the adults.
- The adults were observed reminding children calmly and respectfully not to throw sand, explaining why this was not a good idea while encouraging the children to negotiate and resolve conflict peacefully.
- The 2 adults, who were supervising children playing in both the indoor and outdoor areas, were observed to work well as a team. They were heard, on several occasions, discussing children's individual needs frequently throughout the day and responding accordingly.
- Staff stated meetings take place with management weekly. Notes of these meetings were furnished to the inspector with topics documented including cooking, projects, curriculum activities and children's journals.

### Programme of activities:

- Ongoing scrap books were furnished to the inspector which included photographs and observations of each child's individual holistic learning and progress in the service which were linked to both national frameworks of quality and curriculum.
- Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling which were observed throughout the day; the adults were observed listening intently to the children's conversations and using strategies to extend the children's thinking and learning, including engaging them in shared thinking and problem solving when a child fell over an object in the outdoor area, asking open questions and providing feedback while actively engaged in activities with the children.
- Detailed long, medium- and short-term planning was available which included themed seasonal activities.

### 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-

- having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
- 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a)

Both the indoor and outdoor areas provided flexible spaces and resources for the children to explore, build, move and role play. Activities were child led and children had the opportunity to express their views, take the lead and exercise choice in relation to their engagement in activities and in accessing resources throughout the day.

**Indoors:** The care room was furnished with mainly natural resources and equipment which were suitable for the various age groups of children attending the service. These were available in clearly defined areas which provided opportunities to enhance the learning needs of all children across all areas of development. Examples included a well-stocked arts and crafts area encouraging the children's creative skills and artistic expression, role play equipment such as a wooden dolls house, train tracks, home corner, rocking horse and wooden vehicles encouraging imaginary play and baskets with natural materials promoting open ended play.

### Outdoors:

- The fully enclosed outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children.
- A range of developmentally appropriate equipment and natural materials were observed in use by the children on the day of inspection in use in the outdoor area.
- Children were observed engaged in pumping water using a lever into containers, pouring and measuring and using the water to make potions and mix colours. A second group of children used cane water channel pipes to create a pathway for balls and conkers, they were observed bringing the equipment from the boot room where they had access to different sized wooden blocks, pipes, pots, pans, sieves and trays. A third group of children were digging using child sized spades in a large sand area where they were able to carry and add water changing the composition of the sand enhancing their learning experience.

(b) A rest area with soft furnishing was available in the indoor care room which consisted of a wooden semi-circular arc in which there was three bean bags and a child's rocking chair. Various materials including sheepskins and small individual mats were available for individual use.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The healthy eating policy and a seasonal weekly menu were available for parents to view in the service. Healthy meals and snacks were observed being served at regular intervals throughout the day. Snacks were provided by both the service and the parents/guardians. The atmosphere at mealtimes was observed to be happy and relaxed with both the adults and children engaged in shared chores to ensure a real sense of community. The adults engaged the children in social conversations and the children were encouraged to take their time over their food.

- Snacks of bite sized pieces of fruit and vegetables, prepared by the service, were available throughout the period of time the children were present in the service. This ensured that children who were hungry had access to food outside the service's routine mealtimes and the inspector observed children eating the snacks throughout the day.
- Hot porridge, prepared in the service, was served at 11:00. There were additional food supplements on offer including apple sauce, cooked by the adult, almond butter and brown sugar which most children

availed of during the meal. In addition, a bowl of peppers and cucumbers were also available to the children at this time.

- At 13:00 children were observed eating healthy snacks which had been prepared by the parents/guardians. Examples included berried fruits, brown bread, filled sandwiches and yogurt.
- Age and stage appropriate cutlery and crockery were available at the table.
- Water was available at all times from a water jug with a tap which the children were observed availing of throughout the day.

### 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:

- All doors were secured; the main entrance door at the front of the service was secured on arrival and was operated with a bell. The kitchen door was locked and the key was hung on a hook out of reach of the children.
- The toys, play equipment and natural materials in use in the service appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children on high shelving.
- The sand in the outdoor area was covered and the water in use in the water barrel was added daily ensuring the children did not have access to any toxic or harmful materials in the outdoor area.
- The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured with a high concrete wall and metal fencing. A high metal gate in the outdoor play area was secured with a device ensuring that no unauthorised adult could enter the area or that no unsupervised child could leave the area. In addition, parents dropping off children were observed checking the gate behind them on entry to ensure that it was secure before proceeding to the outdoor area.

##### Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins in use by the adults and children indoors were equipped with thermostatically controlled hot water, 39.2°C, dispensing soap, hand dryers and paper towels for drying hands. Pedal operated bins were in use for the disposal of paper waste.

- Regular handwashing was observed, before and after meals, after toileting and coming in from outdoor play. Adults were nearby to provide reminders to wash and dry hands and to assist if requested by the children.
- Children's belongings were stored on individual hooks and each child had their own slippers to wear indoors helping to improve cleanliness and hygiene.
- Cleaning checklists were available and were noted to be up to date. Staff were observed sweeping the floors and sanitising the tables after the serving of food ensuring the areas were kept clean and hygienic.

### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed being administered on the day.

### Safe Sleep:

- The care room temperature where the 2 children were resting was recorded as 19.3°C.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire extinguishers were secured by brackets to the walls of the service.
- Fire exit doors were unobstructed and fitted with thumb twist cylinders ensuring the quick evacuation of the adults and children in the event of an emergency.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. An Immediate Action Notice was issued onsite on 19/09/2025 in respect of the following which represented a safety risk to the children:
  - Children were observed walking around the food table at 11:05 carrying hot bowls of porridge in which the temperature was recorded at 64°C, posing a scalding risk to the children.
  - Two pots of porridge on the table were accessible to the children in which the temperature of the pots were recorded at 50.3 °C and 45.6°C respectively, posing a scalding risk to the children.
  - A lit wax candle was observed on the table as a decoration during mealtimes, posing a safety risk.
2. Splintered wood and torn felt were accessible to the children on the roof of the outdoor wooden playhouse, posing a safety risk to the children.

### Safe Sleep:

3. An Immediate Action Notice was issued onsite on 19/09/2025 in respect of the following which represented a safety risk to the children:

- Sleep facilities were observed to be inadequate. A child who was attempting to rest/sleep in the care room on a waterproof mattress within an unstable, wooden 3-sided frame known in the service as a wooden gate, which was held together with wool and black webbing. The spaces between the wooden horizontal bars were measured between 20.5 and 23 centimetres and a cotton sheet was placed above the structure posing a safety risk should it fall on the child.
- A second child was observed resting intermittently on a cover which was placed on the floor of the care room, posing a safety risk should a child fall over them while moving around the care room.
- There was no evidence of documented physical sleep checks carried out every 10 minutes which was contrary to the service's safe sleep policy, posing a safety risk to the children. In conversation, an adult stated that none were available or in use.
- Ambient lighting was not provided in the care room while children were resting/sleeping. The lighting in the care room was not reduced and there were no blinds available to limit the amount of light for children wishing to rest/sleep.
- While 2 children were attempting to rest/sleep the care room was noisy which was not conducive for restful sleep. The inspector observed children interacting regularly with the 2 resting children between 12:15 and 12:45.

### Administration of Medication:

4. There was no temperature reducing medication available in the service, posing a safety risk to the children in the event of an emergency.

### Infection Control:

5. Children were observed in the outdoor area washing their hands in a communal bowl which contained used cold water, posing a risk of cross infection. This was documented on the last inspection dated 01/12/ 2023.
6. Perishable food was not stored in a fridge. Children signed in at 09:00 were observed leaving their snacks, including perishable food, on a table in the care room. The inspector observed that the children did not collect these snacks until 13:00, posing a risk of the perishable food spoiling.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider:

### General Safety:

1. All of the safety issues identified on the Immediate Action Notice (IAN) have been addressed to ensure the safety of the children attending the service;
  - No hot liquid food will be served by children to minimise risk of spillage. The adults will serve the porridge once it has cooled down.
  - The porridge pots are now covered with heat resistant covers and placed out of reach of the children.
  - The lit wax candle, in use at mealtimes and only lit when all of the children are seated, is now fully encased in a lantern and placed out of reach of the children.
  - Staff received training on the new benefits risk assessment and a risk assessment and analysis to ensure the safety of the children. The children have received information on fire safety.
2. The roof of the outdoor playhouse has been replaced. The materials used will ensure the longevity of the playhouse.

### Safe Sleep:

3. All of the safety issues identified on the Immediate Action Notice (IAN) have been addressed to ensure the safety of the children attending the service in relation to safe sleep. The wooden gates have been removed from the service, the room has been reorganised and a designated sleep area has been arranged in a quiet area with 2 waterproof sleep mats available. A 10-minute physical sleep record is now available for recording the position, colour, breathing of each child and the room temperature.

### Administration of Medication:

4. Temperature reducing medication has been purchased and is available in the event of an emergency in the service. It is stored in a locked cabinet out of reach of the children. The details of the temperature reducing medication including the expiry date have been added to the first aid checklist and will be checked regularly.

### Infection Control:

5. The communal bowl at the outside water station has been removed to prevent the risk of cross infection.
6. Perishable food is removed from the children's lunch boxes and stored in the fridge.

### Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographs were received in the office of the inspectorate.

### General Safety:

1. In the response to the Immediate Action Notice the following photographs and statement were received from the manager;
  - The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.
  - Photographs of the porridge pots with the heat-resistant covers placed out of reach of the children.
  - Photograph of the wax candle encased within a closed lantern, not accessible to the children and placed out of reach of the children.
  - A copy of the new benefits risk assessment along with a risk assessment and analysis.
2. Photographs of the new roof of the outdoor playhouse with felting.

### Safe Sleep:

3. In the response to the Immediate Action Notice the following photographs, receipt and statement were received from the manager on 22/09/2025.
  - Photographs of the designated sleep area away from noisy activities with 2 waterproof sleep mats placed 50 centimetres apart.
  - A copy of the 10-minute physical sleep template now in place for recording safe sleep.
  - The statement from the manager has been accepted.

### Administration of Medication:

4. A photograph of the temperature reducing medication with an expiry date of 09/2027, stored in its original container and placed in a locked cabinet out of reach of the children, was received in the office of the inspectorate.

### Infection Control:

5. A photograph of the handwash station with no bowl was received.
6. A photograph of the lunch boxes stored in the fridge.

### Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

### 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) Certificates were available to evidence that 2 adults in the service had First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed. The staff roster indicated that at least 1 adult was available while the early years children were on the premises.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was easily accessible to the adults and was available while the early years children were on the premises.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(2) (b)

The inspector observed that the following supplies with expired dates in the first aid box:

- Sterile moist wipes dated 2024-10
- Small dressings dated 2023-01 x 3
- Eye dressings dated 205-05 x 5
- Medium dressings dated 2505-05 x 1
- In addition, a triangular bandage with a ripped wrapper was visible compromising the sterility of the bandage and there was no burn gel available should a child or adult receive a burn, posing a risk that immediate treatment was available in the service to halt the impact of the burn.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

(2)

(b) All the out-of-date supplies have been replaced and burn gel is now available. The first aid checklist with the temperature reducing medication and the burn gel added will be checked for expiry dates and replacement supplies at the monthly staff meeting with management.

## Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)  
(b) A photograph of the new first aid supplies and the burn gel was received.

## Summary Comment

The actions and evidence received from the registered provider have adequately addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 (2) (b).

## 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 firefighting 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)  
(b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The recorded dates were noted as 19/11/2024 and 27/11/2024, respectively.  
(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed on the walls of the service.

## Non-Compliance Information

- (1)  
(a) Records were not maintained of monthly fire drills contrary to the service's Fire Safety policy and regulatory requirements. Documented evidence indicated that the last fire drill carried out, prior to closing for the summer break, was completed on 22 May 2025. In addition, there were no fire drills available for the months of April 2025 and November 2024, which may lead to confusion with the adults and children knowing where to go and what to do to ensure safe evacuation in the event of an emergency.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)  
(a) A fire drill was carried out and recorded on 22/09/2025. Fire drills have been scheduled for the coming months. These will be noted on the curriculum planning and have been allocated a date on the attendance records for each month going forward.

## Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)
- (a) Copies of the recent fire drill and the allocated dates on the attendance records for the future were received in the office of the inspectorate.

## Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider have adequately addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 (1) (a).

## Part VI – Safety

### Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

## Compliance Information

A certificate was furnished which evidenced that the service was insured; the number of children covered on the policy was noted as 22 and the type of service documented was part-time. In addition, cover details also included public liability, outings, fire and theft.