

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY104
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Name of Service:	Headstart at Hannah's
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Address of Service:	Doonbeg, Ballinderry, Tuam, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H54 AK06
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Name of Registered Provider:	Hannah Coen
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	15/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	57	PM	38
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Child and Family Agency, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
Title:	Early Years Inspector.

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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).

Description of service

This full day care service is in a rural area of north County Galway near the town of Tuam and the village of Corofin. The service offers a full day care programme from 07.30 to 18.00 Monday to Friday, for children aged between 0 and 6 years of age. The (ECCE) Early Childhood Care and Education pre-school care programme operates from 09.00 to 12.00, Monday to Friday. The service is in a standalone building and there are five care rooms, a sensory playroom, kitchen, staff room and sanitary facilities. The hot meal of the day is cooked in the service kitchen. The pre-school children have access to secure outdoor play areas to the rear of the premises for play activities and fresh air.

Staffing

The registered provider is the person in charge and there was a named deputy manager to deputise as required. There are a total of 13 adults working in the service, 10 adults work directly with children which includes the registered provider, there is also a cook and 2 school aged staff 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

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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.

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*
- (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 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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

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(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The registered provider was a person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises for the duration of the inspection. Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises when the pre-school children were present.
- (c) A clear management structure was in place, each adult's roles and responsibilities were displayed in the service.

Since the last inspection on the 15 October 2025 there was 1 new adult employed in the service and this file was reviewed on the day of inspection:

- (2)(a) Two of the required two written and validated references on file in respect of the new adult were from a past employer.
- (b) Not required as two references on file from a previous employer.
- (c) A garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of the one new adult. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documentary evidence indicated that the new adult had lived outside the jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months while over the age of 18 years and this police vetting was available for inspection.
- (3) All vetting procedures were carried out for the new adult prior to working in the service.
- (4) There was evidence that the new adult working directly with the children had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent.
- (6A) There was one adult employed in the service under the Access and Inclusion model.
- (7)(a) There was documented evidence that the new adult employed in the service received induction prior to working with pre-school children.

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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 was an adequate number of adults 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 11 adults working directly with 57 children in the morning and 9 adults working with 38 children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that two adults were rostered during the operation of the service.

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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.*

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

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1)

A sample of 20 children's pre-school records were reviewed from the 5 care rooms in operation. These were found to contain all the required information under (1) (a)-(i).

(3) (c)

The children's pre-school records were open to review by the inspectors on the premises.

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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 healthy eating policy was available for parents and guardians to view, the snacks and hot meal were appropriate and the hot meal of the day was bacon, potatoes and vegetables.
- Water was readily available in each of the playrooms and was provided during mealtimes.
- Perishable items that were belonging to preschool children were stored in the service fridge.
- Cutlery and plates were offered and used during children's snack times and were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- The tables and chairs in use were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the preschool children.
- Children attending the service were toilet trained and toileted independently or with some assistance or support by adults as required.
- Younger children in nappies had them changed in a timely caring manner and it was observed that adults engaged with children during nappy changing. The correct procedure at nappy changing was carried out by adults and in line with the service policy and best practice.
- Handwashing was observed prior to eating, after toileting, after outdoor play and after messy play.
- The temperature of the hot water in the sanitary area was maintained at a safe temperature of 37.9°C.
- In the playrooms the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in a designated cosy area. The service also had a sensory room where children could take time out and relax.
- Stackable beds and clean linen were available for sleep. A playroom was converted into a sleep room during the day.
- Physical sleep checks were documented and carried out on sleeping children every 10 minutes as per best practice. An adult remained with children in the playroom while they were sleeping.

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Programme of Activities and its Implementation:

- Each child had a detailed learning journal showing their art and crafts, themes and development for the year.
- A key person system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The role of the key person was to liaise with parents and guardians, conduct observations to support each child's developmental needs.
- The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children's choices and adults. Adults were caring and supportive in their interactions with children.
- The emerging interests were recorded on a board to inform the short-term planning.
- Transitions between activities were well planned by staff and were carried out in a calm and relaxed environment. Good communication between adults in planning activities was observed.
- The service had a transition programme in place for children moving to primary school and the service has linked in with the local primary school.
- The service programme of activity and curriculum which was in place supported the individual needs of each child in line with their age and stage of development. The curriculum was based on different models of best practice in early childhood education.
- There was documentary evidence of the service engagement with the local community. Each of the named professionals who attended the service gave demonstrations on their role in the community for e.g. they had a baker, yoga teacher, ambulance team, dietician, farmer, guard, fire crew, dental hygienist and a samba dancer.
- The activities observed were both adult and child led, both indoors and outdoors with an emphasis of the children's emerging interests, wellbeing and development.

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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

Infection Control:

- All perishable food including bottles of milk were stored in the service fridge preventing the food from spoiling.
- Nappy changing was observed to be carried out in line with best practice throughout the service. A self-sealing leak proof pedal bin was available for the disposal of nappies. All individual items in the nappy changing area were labelled with each child's name and stored in individual containers.
- Handwashing was observed before mealtimes, after toileting, nappy changing and coming in from outdoor play.
- Clean bed linen was available and used at sleep time for children over 2 years of age.
- Soothers in use were cleaned in a microwave steriliser ensuring they were sterilised and then stored in individually labelled containers preventing the spread of germs.
- Windows were opened in the playrooms and in the sanitary areas ensuring the circulation of fresh air.
- Wash hand basins in use by the adults and the children were supplied with dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste.

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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 service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid responder for children was available to the children attending the pre-school service. Four adults had current training in first aid response for children.
- (2)(a) The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the service.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped with all contents within expiry dates and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.