

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY106
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Name of Service:	Home from Home
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Address of Service:	Tullyvrick, Glann Road, Oughterard, Co. Galway.
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Eircode:	H91 F3AF
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Name of Registered Providers:	Hilda O'Halloran, Sarah Coyne
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Service type:	Part Time, sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Child and Family Agency, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	F Nic Dhonnacha
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 pre-school is located in a rural village in Connemara called Oughterard. This part-time pre-school caters for a maximum of 21 children at any one time, for children aged between 2 years and 8 months and 6 years from Monday to Friday. Currently the pre-school is operating a sessional service between 9.00hrs and 12.00hrs for 38 weeks of the year. An Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) school care programme and sessional care programme is offered. Additionally, the pre-school offers a breakfast club between 8.00 and 8.40hrs and an afterschool programme for school aged children between 1.30hrs and 18.00hrs. There is a quiet rest area available in the playroom to facilitate a child to rest or opt out of an activity if he/she wishes to. The pre-school operates from a room located in a purpose-built premises to the rear of one of the registered providers home. There is a designated outdoor play area to the side of the building. The service offers a play-based curriculum focusing on the children's emerging interests with elements of Montessori, The High Scope Method and Reggio Emilia Method.

Staffing

Both registered providers are on the premises on a daily basis. There is a designated person in charge. The two staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of a Level 6 to Level 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were available on file for the staff. The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing 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 announced/unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. 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 providers, 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.

(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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.
- (b) The two registered providers are the people in charge and were on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Documentary evidence in the form of staff rotas indicated that both registered providers were on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.
- The two staff files were reviewed.
- (2)(a)&(b) Four validated written references on file, in respect of the two staff, were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the two staff.

- (d) Documentary evidence indicated that two of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and had the required police vetting.
- (4) Two staff working directly with the children had evidence of *Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)* Level 6 to Level 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the person in charge ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children.
- (2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 16 pre-school children aged between 3 to 5 years attending the service sessional programme.

The two registered providers were working directly with the children.
- (8)(a) The registered providers were on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

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

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks without being rushed. The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils used were suitable for the children's ages and stage of development. A water station was available for the children to access their drink bottles when they wanted to.
- No child wore a nappy on the day of inspection.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence, and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried and the children had the freedom to move about into the various play and rest areas.
- The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging, each day, while in the service.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

- The staff used soft tones, by using the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact, while positively praising and encouraging the children throughout the session.
- The staff collaborate with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns. The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a

child's activities and initiating games and activities. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.

- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', 'thank you for sharing your thoughts with us' to allow children to critically think and explore.
- Parents and guardians receive a snapshot account of each individual child's week with important notes and plans from the preschool at the end of each week.
- On speaking with staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the preschool including the child's likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times, private phone application, or by phone calls. The service had individual child profile books 'Our Learning Story', which captured the child's activities and experiences with documentary / photographic evidence and key adult observations showing various activities and themes that the children engaged in such as My Family, Ireland, Planting, Butterflies and Caterpillars, Springtime, Unicorns, Dentist and many more to date. The theme of this week was 'Our Senses'.
- Parents/ guardians received copies of the updated policies, parents' handbook and an information pack at the beginning of the new term.
- The staff provided opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences. Children were observed talking about their senses, singing songs and listening to stories. The children also played a guessing game about senses at circle time and smelt some handmade flowers with various scents from each.
- On the day of inspection, the children were observed to free play, play at tabletop activities, at circle time, at construction building, connecting, at sensory play, at pretend kitchen / house and dolls, sorting and stacking materials and played with coloured rice in the sand basin. The children were observed enjoying arts and crafts, sensory play and play dough.
- On the day of inspection, in the outdoor area, the children were observed on the slide, climbing the activity centre, building rubber blocks, playing with transport vehicles, using foot pedalled cars and tractors, at sand play, digging, running, chasing, sorting, and exploring.

Physical and Material Environment

- The space in the playroom was designed and arranged to: maintain a space that is clean, organised, and free of clutter. The room accommodated children individually, in small groups and in a large group. The playroom was divided into areas that were supplied with materials organised in a way to support children's play and learning.
- The environment was comfortable, inviting and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and staff in the pre-school.
- The children had access to enough varied materials and equipment, which were rotated to suit the changing programme, to suit current and new interests.
- Materials and equipment were arranged so they were visible and readily accessible to promote independent access by children. There were play materials with a variety of colours, textures, shapes, and sizes to experiment with and explore that were freely available in the service. For examples: open-ended objects such as play dough, construction and building materials such as stacking shapes, links, connectors, threading material, bricks, shape cutters and blocks. There were problem solving items such as puzzles, counters, links, matching cards, games, and jigsaws. There were measuring and pouring items, such as scoops, jugs, cartons, and containers. There was role play areas such as kitchens, restaurant, houses with utensils and furniture. There was dress up clothing. There were creative play areas with a selection of art and craft materials including paints, glue, pencils, crayons, and paper. There were soft toys, shapes, books, farm and aquatic animals, dolls and a baby buggy. There were age and stage appropriate furniture, themed shaped furniture, rocking and musical toys. There were tuff tables with a variety of sensory material to play with. There was a library book area.
- There was a cosy area with soft wipeable seating, and the service provided stackable beds for sleep provision if required.
- Displayed on the walls were visual aids, posters, educational materials, and children's artwork. Displays included birthday, family photographs, our senses, the Butterfly group and Caterpillar group, the weather, class attendance numbers, little helpers, emotions, I love the world and the human body. Pictorial displays of the daily routine, planning boards, emerging interests, and themes. Hanging from the playroom's ceiling were decorations, bunting and samples of children's artwork.

The outdoor play area

- The service balanced the need for safety with the need to provide physical, challenging experiences for children. The area was secured by walls and a gate and covered with rubber slabs and concrete pathways.

- The equipment and materials in the outdoor play areas supported children’s play, movement, and exploration, and provided opportunities exclusive to the outdoors.
- Materials and equipment included a large wooden house with a sand area, trucks, cars, diggers, pots pans and shovels. A mud kitchen with kitchen accessories, crockery, and utensils. Bicycles, push cars, tractors, a petrol station, rubber blocks and a construction area. There was an activity centre with climbing rope, ladder, slide and bars. Balls and a basketball net as well as balance beams and a tuff table.
- There was a shed for the storage of additional outdoor equipment and materials.

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:

- There was a secure system, into the main entrance front doors.
- The external outdoor play area was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- The fire doors were unobstructed.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all of the children, attending the pre-school.
- The playroom temperature was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperature was maintained between 16°C to 20°C.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and disposable paper hand towels.
- During the inspection, the children were assisted and encouraged to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after using a tissue, and after playing outdoors.

- There was one designated nappy changing area with a designated wash hand basin. No child wore a nappy on the day of inspection.
- The toys and play equipment were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- The playroom was observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows and doors left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- The service had cleaning records for the materials, equipment, and furnishings.
- Perishable items from the children's lunch boxes were stored in the service fridge.

Safe Sleep:

- There was a safe sleep policy available that detailed temperature, lighting, ventilation, child safety requirements, as per best practice guidelines.
- Rest and quiet areas were provided in the playroom to facilitate a child to rest or opt out of an activity if he or she chose.
- Stackable beds and clean linen were available for sleep provision if required.

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 two registered providers had current training in First Aid Responder (FAR) delivered by a training provider approved by PHECC (The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council) and they were both available to the children at all times.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position in the service.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The preschool service had evidence of adequate insurance for 22 preschool children in a full day care service with an expiry date of 27/03/2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)&(2) The main playroom.

The following measurements apply.

Room Name	Square Metres	Service Type	Service age range of pre-school children in the room	Schedule 6 Age Range	Clear Floor Space	Adult Child Ratios	Maximum number of children for age range
The playroom	47.62 square meters	sessional	2-6 yrs.	3 to 6 yrs.	1.818 square metres	1: 11	22
		Part time	0 (at present operating sessional and afterschool programme)	3-6yrs	2.3 square meters	1:8	20