

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY163
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Name of Service:	Mountbellew Community Childcare Group
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Address of Service:	Mountbellew Community Childcare Centre, The Demesne, Mountbellew, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H53 XR20
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Name of Registered Provider:	Denise Flanagan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/03/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	31
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	TUSLA - Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
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Inspection undertaken by:	H. Heagney & A. Kennedy
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

This purpose-built service comprises of two ground floor buildings, in the town of Mountbellew, Co. Galway. Mountbellew Community Childcare Group offers a full day care service from 7.30hrs to 18.00hrs. An Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) and sessional programmes from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs and 9.30hrs to 12.30hrs is also offered. The service caters for pre-school children aged between 1 to 6 years of age. Additionally, a breakfast club from 7.30hrs to 9.20hrs and an afterschool programme from 14.00hrs to 18.00hrs. A play-based child centre pedagogy focusing on emerging interests is offered. There are four pre-school playrooms namely the Duckling room, Monkey room, Panda room, and Giraffe room. An additional room named the Den is solely used for the school aged children attending the breakfast club/ afterschool programme. There are two designated sleep rooms. The Ducklings sleep room has nine cots, for children under 18 months of age. The Monkey sleep room has fourteen stackable beds and three sleep mats, providing the opportunity for older children to sleep. Quiet rest areas are provided in each of the playrooms to facilitate a child to rest or opt out of an activity if he/she chooses to. The premises has its own kitchen, where meals are prepared, cooked, and stored on site. There is a kitchenette in the second building adjacent to the Giraffe and the Den playroom. The children have access to various outdoor play areas, for children's physical play activities, exploration, and fresh air.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service. Twenty-two staff including the registered provider work in the service. Thirteen staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. These staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education. There is a designated chef who prepares, cooks, and serves the service meals. There is one office administrator who also works with school aged children. There is a staff member designated to general duties and works with school aged children. An additional four staff are designated to the care of the school aged children. There are two maintenance persons, one adult who works in the service while it is operating, and the second adult works at the weekends and evenings.

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, and health, welfare and development of child. 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 inspectors wish 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 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.

(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 person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for throughout the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.

(c)

There was 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.

Files for the seventeen staff, the thirteen staff with childcare qualifications, the chef, the office administrator, the person employed for general duties and the maintenance person working in the pre-school service were reviewed.

(2)(a)&(b)

Thirty-four of the thirty-four written validated references, on file for the seventeen staff were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of seventeen staff. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)
Three of the seventeen staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age and had the required police vetting.

(4)
Thirteen staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the thirteen staff.

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 the adult child ratios were adhered to.

(2)
Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to. On the morning of the inspection, there were 51 pre-school children aged between 1 to 5 years.

- 10 children were aged 1 to 2 years,
- 6 children were aged 2 to 3 years,
- 35 children were aged 3 to 5 years.

There were eight childcare staff directly caring for these children. There was a designated chef who prepared, cooked, and served the main meals. There was an office administrator who assisted in the administration part of the inspection.

In the afternoon, there were 31 pre-school children aged between 1 to 5 years.

- 8 children were aged 1 to 2 years,
- 10 children were aged 2 to 3 years.
- 13 children were aged 3 to 5 years.

There were five staff caring for these children.

(8)(a)

The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises while the pre-school was operating

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.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)&(i)

A random sample of twenty-five children's records were reviewed by the early year's inspectors.

The twenty-five records reviewed showed that the entries were factual, consistent, and accurate.

The children's records contained the following:

- The name and date of birth of the child.
- The date in which the child first commenced in the service.
- The date on which the child stopped attending the service (where relevant).
- The name and address of the child's parent or guardian, and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
- Written authorisation / permissions for collecting the child.
- Details are recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
- The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
- A record of any immunisations the child has had.
- Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical treatment if there was / is an emergency.

(4)&(5)

The registered provider advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that all relevant children's records were kept for 2 years from the date a child stops attending 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,

Compliance Information

- Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities to support children's health wellbeing and development within the service.
- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The staff complied with the service's healthy eating policy.
- The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- On the day of inspection, fourteen children wore nappies and were changed on a regular basis. The privacy and dignity of a child having their nappy changed was maintained. The older children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting / nappy changing.
- Children have plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills for example the staff showed children how to wash hands properly, children's hands were washed before snacks and meals, after toileting and nappy changing, after blowing their nose, after messy and outdoor play.
- The children were observed at free play, drawing, at water play, playing with animals and transport vehicles, playing kitchen and house. At circle time, the children gave their weekend news and stories. The staff read books for example 'Ping learns to share' and 'Little red riding hood' and the children gave their views. The staff used visual aids and probed with questions such as 'who is this?', 'how many are there?', and 'where is that?' 'tell me what this is?'.
- The children spent significant time in the outdoor areas to the rear and sides of the premises. The children engaged in digging, riding push cars, tractors, running, playing hide and seek, chasing, pushing and filling wheelbarrows, and balancing on wooden beams.

The children played on see saws, on slides, on rockers, and enjoyed the activity centre, playing house, playing mix and match connect games, at pretend play and stacking.

- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by -
 - having a key person system for each child,
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
 - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language,
 - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact,
 - providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
 - providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks,
 - working 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 services planned times when the younger and older siblings and friends could be together for example playing in the outdoor area and during the service fire drill.
- The service supported children to notice and understand how others were feeling and how to comfort and help them.
- The outdoor environment provided children with activities and opportunities for
 - fresh air, discovery, relaxing (e.g., quiet seating areas, an all-weather digging sand area),
 - releasing energy (e.g., playing chase),
 - physical exercise and play (e.g., jumping, riding on push cars),
 - exploring, engaging, and experimenting with nature (e.g., at water play, exploring for bugs and insects, gardening),
 - feelings associated with taking risks, learning about risk, and learning from risk, and challenging their own capabilities within safe limits (e.g. climbing the activity centre and playing on the rockers and see saws).
- On speaking with the staff, the inspectors were informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child’s experiences in the pre-school including the child’s likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in.

This information was provided at collection times, via text messages, by phone calls, by email. The parents/guardians of the younger children are advised daily by email of the child's food provision, sleep provision, nappy changes, and any other daily updates.

- There was a planning wall with each child's recent learning and interests which was linked to the child's profile scrapbook. The staff collated individual profile scrapbooks showing photographs and a description of the experience that the child engaged in play and the child's artwork, handprints and interests 'all about me'. Additionally, children's art and craft work was collated and given to parents and guardians on a regular basis.
- The themes of the month included Mother's Day, St Patrick's day, the Zoo, Easter, and Sequencing.
- 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. The inspectors noted the staff acknowledged a child's achievements 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.
- The staff ensured that the children had ongoing opportunities to interact informally with one another for example at free play, parallel play, and eating together.
- The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Older children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

(1)(b)

- There were cosy areas with child sized couches, soft floor matting and cushions in the each of the playrooms. The service had two designated sleep rooms, one room had nine cots, and the second sleep room had fourteen stackable beds and three sleep mats. On the day of inspection, older children were observed sleeping on the stackable beds and mats while younger children were observed sleeping on demand in their designated cot.

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

- There was a healthy eating policy. The person in charge advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids, and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- The main meals were provided by the service and prepared and cooked on site by the designated chef.
- Between 8.00hrs to 9.00hrs, the children had the opportunity for cereal, with milk.
- On the morning of the inspection, the children in the Giraffe and Panda room attending on a sessional basis had their snacks provided by parents and guardians of sandwiches, fruit pieces, crackers, rice cakes, cheese and yogurts.
- At 10:15hrs, the younger children in the Duckling and Monkey rooms had their fruit snack which consisted of apples, oranges, banana, raspberries, and strawberries with natural yogurt, which was supplied by the service.
- Between 12:15hrs and 12:30hrs, the children had a hot dinner which consisted of pasta in tomato sauce with smoked bacon and grated cheese.
- At 15:25hrs, the children were offered homemade potato cakes with baked beans and a selection of yogurts and water to drink.
- The staff advised the inspectors that there is no child currently on formula feed.
- Cutlery and plates were offered for children's snack / mealtimes.
- Clean and safe drinking water was at a low-level and accessible to children in each of the playrooms.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety

1. Garda vetting was available for seventeen staff members. However, the renewal date for six staff members of the vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice ‘EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting’. It is acknowledged that on the 13th of March 2024, the registered provider submitted evidence that application process for Garda vetting for the six staff had commenced.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 17th of April 2024, the registered provider advised of the following;

Corrective and Preventive Action

Going forward staff will be vetting within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice ‘EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting’

Supporting documentation submitted

Garda vetting dated 25th and 26th of March 2024 was submitted for the six staff members.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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 there were two staff trained in first aid responder were available to the children, attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a)
There were two first aid boxes, with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in conspicuous position in each of the two separate buildings.
- (b)
The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes were fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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.
- (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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 11th of March 2024.
- (b)
Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 28th of August 2023.
The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 28th of August 2023.
- (4)
Notices were displayed within the pre-school of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance specifying the address of the service, catering for a full day care service for 86 children at any one time, with an expiry date of 27th of March 2024, was available.

The insurance covered

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- against fire and theft,
- outings,
- building.