

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY241
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Name of Service:	Cairde Early Learning Centre
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Address of Service:	Cosmona, Loughrea, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H62 X662
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Name of Registered Provider:	Noreen Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day
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Day 1 of Inspection:	23/03/2026
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Day 2 of Inspection:	24/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	64	PM	61
Day 2	AM	71	PM	68

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel and S. Meehan
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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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 purpose-built early years' service is based in Cosmona, on the outskirts of the town of Loughrea in Co Galway. The service operating hours are 07.30 to 18.00, from Monday to Friday. It is registered to accommodate children aged 0 - 6 years and caters for full day, part-time and sessional care incorporating the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme from 09.30 to 12.30. This ground floor premises has a total of four care rooms in use- the Nursery, Junior Toddlers, Senior Toddlers and Junior Pre-school 2. On the first floor there are a further two pre-school care rooms- namely Junior and Senior Pre School. The service has a designated kitchen where food is reheated, which is supplied by an external company. To the rear of the premises children have access to a large outdoor play area which is divided into age and stage appropriate areas.

Staffing

There were 15 of the 17 adults employed by the service working directly with the children on Day 1 and Day 2, including the manager. In addition, the area manager assisted with the administration of the inspection, two students are on work experience, a contractor attends once a week and an adult was on induction. 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

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- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was 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.

A sampling process in relation to the 20 of the 74 children attending across all care rooms was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Pre-school child (1) (a-i) and Regulation 16 (k) Records in relation to a Pre-school Service.

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 area manager, manager, deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days 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.

(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.

(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:

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

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The manager was the person in charge and there was a person available to deputise as required.
- (b) The staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or the deputy were available while the early children were present in the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure displayed, with roles and responsibilities outlined, in the reception area of the service.
- (2) The staff roster indicated that 9 adults had been employed since the last inspection on the 20 May 2025, along

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with 2 students carrying out work placement and a contractor. These files were reviewed. In addition, six adults requiring renewal of garda vetting were also reviewed.

(a) Sixteen of the 24 written and validated references for the 12 adults were from a previous employer.

(b) The remaining 8 of 24 validated references for the 12 adults were from other sources.

(c) Thirteen out of 18 adults had garda vetting on file. 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) International police vetting was available for six adults who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six months as an adult.

(4) Documentation was on file for the 9 adults working directly with children which evidenced that 3 of the adults held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework and 6 adults had a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(7)(a) Documents were on file to evidence that supervision and induction had taken place for the new adults working directly with the children and the two students on placement.

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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the day of inspection.

(2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to.

On day 1 there were 15 adults working directly with 64 children in the morning and 15 adults working directly

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with 61 children in the afternoon. On day 2 there were 15 adults working directly with 71 children in the morning and 15 adults working directly with 68 children in the afternoon

(8)(a) Documentary evidence on the roster indicated that at least two adults were on the premises when the early years service was in operation.

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 of 74 children's pre-school records were reviewed from the six care rooms in operation. These were found to contain all of 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 IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (i) A staff roster was available to reflect the start, finish and break times of the staff present on both days of inspection.
- (k) Out of the 74 registered children a sample of 20 children's accident and incident reports were reviewed across all six care rooms. All the information required under this part of the regulation was present.

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 service promoted healthy eating. Hot food, provided by the service, was served at lunch time on both days of inspection. Day 1 consisted of lasagne and Day 2 consisted of vegan stew. Staff stated that breakfast provided consisted of oat and wheat-based cereals.
- Parents/guardians of children supplied all the snacks. All food was observed to be healthy and nutritious and children's cultural requirements were taken into account as observed, in the Nursery care room, on both days.
- Individually labelled bottles and cups located at nearby water stations were easily accessible to the children in each of the care rooms. Jugs of water were available in the event these need to be refilled.
- Each child in the care rooms had access to appropriate cutlery and crockery for the age and stage of development of the children in the service.

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- Children in the Nursery care room were observed wearing bibs for mealtimes and overalls were provided in all care rooms for messy activities.
- Rest areas were provided in each care room. These were observed to have soft furnishings for children who wished to sit away from noisy activities or who wished to rest.
- Adults were observed to respond to children's cues throughout the day. Examples included children's toileting needs, completing tasks and emotional support.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and as required in the Junior Toddler care room. In conversation, a staff member stated that nappy changes are carried out every two and half hours and when necessary. These interactions were noted to be positive with staff and children singing and chatting to each other.
- Children's independence was encouraged with examples including toileting, being the helper and taking the lead in activities. In addition, activities where children contributed to the emotional well-being of their peers was also observed. An example included children identifying positive qualities in each other which were promoted by the adults.
- Adults were observed to be caring and sensitive in their interactions with the children.
- Children had open discussions with adults in relation to their pets at home and this was evidenced with a visual display on the walls of the service in relation to this theme.
- The children were observed in the outdoor play areas throughout the day. These areas offered alternative learning environments for the children including tunnels, a tepee, a playhouse, construction and planting areas and a wooden boat and wooden bus promoting imaginary play. A variety of resources were available for practising gross motor skills including tricycles, ride-ons and tractors. A covered area was available providing shelter where the children could play outdoors in all weathers.

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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

General Safety:

- The main perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured with high wooden panelling and high metal gates preventing children from leaving unsupervised and unauthorised adults from entering the areas.
- Each of the outdoor spaces was divided into age and stage appropriate areas ensuring that each age group had safe, developmentally stimulating experiences.
- The main entrance doors were secured on arrival and a buzzer system was in place ensuring unauthorised adults could not enter the service.
- The kitchen area of the Nursery care room was cordoned off to prevent the children gaining access to the area.
- All indoor and outdoor toys appeared in good condition and were well maintained.
- The fire escape stairs, located at the back of the building were fitted with foam preventing children banging into them.
- Access to the kitchen was by a number lock, ensuring children could not gain access.

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.
- Handwashing was observed before mealtimes, after toileting, nappy changing and coming in from outdoor play.
- All cots were fitted with waterproof mattresses ensuring they could be easily disinfected after each use.
- 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 care rooms 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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Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medications were available in the event of an emergency. Dates of expiry included three bottles dated 12/27, and two individual bottles dated 01/27 and 04/28. All bottles were stored in their original containers out of reach of the children.
- No medication was observed being administered on the day.

Safe Sleep:

- Cots and sleep mats were placed 50 centimetres apart to ensure the safety of the sleeping/resting children.
- Physical sleep checks were observed to be carried out within a 10-minute period as per the service policy and requirements.
- Blind cords were fitted correctly and secured on hooks which were placed out of reach of the children.
- Sleep room temperatures in the nursery sleep room were recorded as 20°C within the recommended temperatures of 16-20°C for children under 12 months. The sleep room temperature of the Junior Toddlers, where children were aged over 24 months was recorded as 20.8°C within the recommended temperature for children over 12 months of 18°C to 22°C.
- Cellular blankets were in use in the Nursery sleep room for children under 12 months helping to reduce the risk of overheating.

Fire Safety:

- The fire assembly point was visible in the outdoor car park area a safe distance away from the service.
- Fire extinguishers were secured by brackets to the walls of the service.
- The procedures to be carried out in the event of a fire were visible on the wall of the service beside the entrance door.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Five of 18 adults did not have garda vetting disclosures dated within the previous 3 years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice "EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting" posing a potential safety risk to the children. It was acknowledged that a garda vetting disclosure for one of five of the adults was received on 25/03/2026.
2. Hot water, in the wash hand basins in the children's sanitary area, on the ground floor on day 1, were recorded over 43°C posing a safety risk to the children. It was acknowledged that a plumber had been in attendance by day 2 and these were rectified with the temperatures recorded under 39.7°C.

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- On day 1 a flex from the air conditioning unit in sleep room 2 was accessible to the children. It was acknowledged that when informed the area manager secured the flex out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- On day 1 the pedal on the nappy changing bin in the Junior Toddler sanitary area was broken, posing a risk of cross infection from the number of hands in direct contact with the lid. It was acknowledged that this was replaced on the day 2 of inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider;

General Safety:

- Garda vetting renewals are now on file for the 5 adults whose garda vetting had expired. In future, all garda vetting will be regularly checked to ensure compliance. Renewals will be carried out three months prior to expiry.
- A plumber was called and the hot water in the wash hand basins in the children's sanitary area on the ground floor was rectified. All hot water in the wash hand basins have been thermostatically controlled to ensure the correct temperature range and these will be checked regularly.
- When informed the flex from the air conditioning unit in sleep room 2 was secured, out of reach of the children. The manager stated that staff will ensure that no flexes or cords are accessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- The nappy changing bin in the Junior Toddler sanitary area was replaced before the service opened on day 2 of inspection. A spare nappy changing bin will be kept in the service to ensure that there is no risk of cross infection in the event that there is a broken bin which requires replacing.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documentation was received in the office of the inspectorate.

General Safety:

- Five garda vetting renewals were received in the office of the inspectorate. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.
- On day 2 of inspection the inspectors were informed that a plumber had been on site to rectify the temperatures of the hot water in the sinks in the children's sanitary area on the ground floor. The inspector checked the temperature of the hot water in the sinks and these were noted to be below the recommended maximum temperature of 43°C.

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3. The actions taken by the manager and the statement made have been accepted.

Infection Control:

4. The inspectors observed that a new nappy changing bin was in place, at the start of day 2 of the inspection, in the Junior Toddler sanitary area. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

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

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required.*

Compliance Information

(a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. It was observed on day 1 that the middle tap in one of three wash hand basins in the children's changing area, on the ground floor, could not be turned on. In conversation, a staff member stated that this had been reported to management previously. It was acknowledged that on day 2 a new tap had been ordered
 2. On day 1 it was observed the vent in the ground floor changing area was covered in dust. It was acknowledged that this was had been cleaned on day 2. The area manager stated that the vents would be added to the cleaning schedule.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statements were received by the registered provider;

- (d)
1. All taps have been replaced in the children's changing area on the ground floor. These will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are working effectively.
 2. The vent in the ground floor changing area was cleaned on day 2. These have since been added to the cleaning schedule to ensure that they are kept clean.

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Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographs of the new taps were received in the office of the inspectorate.
2. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 29 (d).