

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY258		
Name of Service:	The Den Creche		
Address of Service:	Unit 21, Barna Village Centre, Barna, Co. Galway.		
Eircode:	H91 W621		
Name of Registered Provider:	Tara Cunningham		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time		
Date of Inspection:	20/02/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM 21
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.		
Inspection undertaken by:	F.Nic Dhonnacha & S.Meehan		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		

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 pre-school service is part of a commercial premises, in the village of Barna, West, Co. Galway. This privately operated service offers a full day care and part time care provision from 7.30hrs to 18.30hrs. The service is registered for pre-school children aged 1 year to 5 years of age. The service is currently operating two playrooms namely the Wobbler / Toddler room and the Montessori room. The service has its own kitchen, where children's dinners are prepared, cooked, and stored on site. There is a designated sleep room adjacent to the Wobbler/ Toddler room, with 5 cots for children under 2 years of age, sleep provision. Sleep mats and stackable beds are available for children over 2 years of age. In both playroom, quiet rest areas with child size seating and soft matting are available for children to rest or opt out of an activity, if they wish to do so. To the side of the building, there are secure outdoor play areas for children's play, exploration, and activities. A child centred play-based pre-school curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided.

Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge. There is a named manager and deputy person available to be in charge. There are a total of 9 staff including the registered provider, currently working in the premises. Seven staff with a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) *at a minimum of a Level 5*, Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going 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 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 16,19,23, 26 and 29; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 11 and 25. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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 (manager), 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 in their absence.

(b) There was a person in charge on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. The manager and registered provider arrived during the morning of 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.

(2)(a)&(b) Eighteen written validated references, on file for the nine staff members were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 9 staff.

(d) Two of the nine staff who had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 months, while over the age of 18 years had evidence of police vetting.

(4) Seven staff held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of a Level 5, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the seven 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

(2) On the morning of the inspection, there were 24 preschool children being directly cared for by 4 staff.

- 2 children were aged 1 to 2 years,
- 8 children were aged between 2 to 3 years,
- 12 children were aged 3 to 4 years,
- 2 children were aged 4 to 5 years of age.

Additionally, the registered provider assisted with the administration function of the inspection and acted as childcare relief. The new manager carried out administration duties on the day of inspection.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 staff were on the premises during the operating hours of the preschool.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection from 14.00hrs to 15.00hrs, a sufficient number of adults were not working directly with the children in the Montessori room.

Area	Number and age range of children present	Adult/Child ratios required	Number of adults required	Number of adults provided
Montessori room	14 children at 10.00 hrs	3 – 5 years	2	2
	12 children at 14.20hrs (aged 3 to 5 years)	= 1:8	2	1

Additionally, it was acknowledged by the registered provider that a staff member became unwell and a relief staff member was contacted to come in to assist in the Montessori Room in the afternoon of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 8/4/2024 the registered provider advised of the following.

Corrective and Preventive Action

A relief staff member was contacted to come in to work and provide cover in the preschool service.

The relief staff member assisted with childcare duties and relief in the Montessori room as soon as she arrived on the premises.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider addressed the non-compliance identified under Reg 11 (1).

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:
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
 - (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
 - (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (h) There were record details of attendance for the pre-school children on a daily basis in both playrooms.
- (j) There was a documented system for recording details of medication administration for the pre-school child in the service and signed parental or guardian consent was available.
- (k) The service had a documented system for recording any accidents incidents or injuries involving a child attending the service with parental/ guardian signatures.

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.

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service and a healthy eating policy was available on request.
- Nutritious meals and snacks were served at regular times, but there was flexibility. All the children ate together for their snacks and main meals and had the freedom of movement within their respective playroom. The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff. Documentary evidence indicated that the children were encouraged to try different food tastes, textures, colours, and so forth.

- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet, supervision was provided as required by the children. The children placed a smiley face poster on the door of the toilet to alert staff and other children that the toilet was in use.
- Seven children wore a nappy on the day of inspection and had their nappies changed on a regular basis, in the designated nappy changing areas.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help with personal hygiene and nasal care skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. The children have plenty of opportunities to move about themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. All the children had opportunities to explore their environment both indoors and outdoors.

Physical and Material Environment

- The indoor environment is comfortable, pleasant and safe and is laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and adults in the setting. The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development in both playrooms.
- There were four highchairs available for the Wobbler/Toddler room if required. There was a cosy area within each of the playrooms with child sized couches provided which could be adapted as a rest area for the children to rest or opt out of activities if they so wished.
- The playrooms were well defined with toys, play materials and equipment appropriate to the ages and stages of development of the children in each room. Storage boxes with play materials and toys were clearly labelled and easily accessible to the preschool children.
- The outdoor environment was spacious and divided into two sections for the children. It provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative, and enriching experiences for all children.
- The outdoor play area had an impact absorbing surface, high walls fencing and gates. Items included ride on cars and tricycles, a playhouse, footballs, obstacle course, an activity unit, see saw, buggies, wheel barrows, balance beams, were amongst the play equipment provided. A storage shed was available for the storage of outdoor play equipment at the end of the session.

Supporting Relationships.

- A key person who helps the child feel familiar with the setting was observed in both play rooms, the staff demonstrated an appropriate level of knowledge of the children's preferences, interests, and individual capabilities and this information was shared with the parents at collection time.

- The service supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with siblings, peers, and other children, by providing opportunities for small and large group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging.
- Staff responded to infants in a timely and appropriate way when they cried or became upset.
- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be independent while they had free play, tabletop activities, pretend play, artwork, and imaginative play.
- By encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking, using soft tones, the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- The children were observed at circle time listening to stories, singing songs, painting, and playing matching games. The children were observed playing in the running, chasing, playing ball, climbing on the obstacle course and pedalling in foot-controlled cars in the outdoor play areas.
- On speaking with 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 interests, preferences and play activities engaged in. The staff communicated informally with parents/guardians during drop off and collection periods from the service. The inspectors observed that staff interacted in a positive manner with parents/guardians.

Information about the service and general information was displayed on the notice board, inside the main door.

- The children's art and craft materials were collated into individual child profile scrapbooks, which captured the child's activities and experiences with documentary and photographic evidence. There was also evidence of staff observations, developing learning stories, medication administration, safe sleep records, and any potential risk / accident and incident records in each playroom. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences, the themes of the week was The Life Cycle of the Butterfly.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

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

Compliance Information

- The service provided adequate and nutritious food for the children in attendance. A weekly menu was available outlining the timing and meals provided to the children. The children have the opportunity for breakfast on arrival in the morning, cereal or toast with milk or water is offered to drink.
- In the morning and afternoon, the children had their snacks provided by the service which included crackers, fruit, and yogurts.
- For children attending on a part-time or full day care, the dinner was prepared, cooked, and stored on site by a designated chef in the service kitchen. Chicken curry and rice with vegetables was provided on the day of inspection. Children had the opportunity for seconds if desired. Water was served with the main meal.
- The afternoon meal consisted of beans, toast and some chopped fruit with water to drink.
- Drinking water was available and accessible to all children in their playrooms.
- There were designated service fridge for the safe storage of perishable foodstuffs.
- Powdered infant formula for the children in the Wobbler/Toddler playroom, was prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) best practice guidance, which advise that powdered infant formula is made up at home. It was stored in the service fridge until required.

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 entrance door into the pre-school was secure to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.

- The external outdoor play areas were secured by fencing, walls and gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area or children could not exit unsupervised.
- The doors into the kitchen, office, and adult only sanitary room had a system of security.
- All cleaning agents and equipment were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Blinds cords were secured by fasteners and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- The fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled and stored in the nappy changing area.
The children's barrier creams were clearly individually labelled / stored within their designated nappy changing areas.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms.
- Individual labelled storage boxes were available for the safe management of children's soothers in the service.
- There was a safe system for sterilizing baby soothers and records were maintained.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.
- Staff members demonstrated awareness of the medication administration policy and the records that need to be maintained.

Safe Sleep:

- There was a new refurbished designated sleep room adjacent to the Nursery room which had twelve cots for children under 2 years of age, sleep provision. Additionally, there were sleep mats and stackable beds available for older children's sleep provision.
- Children were observed sleeping on demand following cues and signs of tiredness.

- Older children had designated relaxation, chill out time.
- The service had safe and comfortable spaces for the younger toddlers to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up, explore and to be protected from children who were more mobile.
- A thermometer was available in the sleep room and used as the method of recording the sleep room temperature and necessary any remedial action when temperatures were above 20 °C and below 16 °C.

Fire Safety:

- The fire escape routes and passageways in the service were clear from any obstructions.
- The fire assembly point was clearly displayed outside the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were available near the fire doors to demonstrate how to exit from the premises.

Outing:

- No outings were carried out on the day of inspection.

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

(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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) While it is recognised that five adults were trained in first aid, no staff member had current training in First Aid Responder (FAR) delivered by a training provider approved by PHECC (The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council) who was available to the children at all times.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 8/4/2024 & 9/4/2024 the registered provider advised of the following

Corrective and Preventive Action

A First aid responder course has been booked for one adult, to be completed by 28th of March.

A second adult has been booked to attend a FAR first aid course on the 15th, 16th and 17th of May 2024.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of an email to confirm an adult on the premises will be attending a First Aid Responder (FAR) course which is scheduled on the 22nd 25th and 28th of March 2024.

A confirmation email from the course provider stating the FAR course was completed by one adult staff member and the certificate will be issued within a month was sent to the office of the early years' inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspectorate has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 (1) has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service.
The last recorded fire drill was in 11/01/2024.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 8/09/2023.
The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 8/09
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (b)
- Appropriate security systems were in place to protect the premises from any unauthorised entry, and unsupervised exit of children from the service.
 - Exits were clearly identified and visible during service hours.
 - The physical environment was safe, secure, and suitable for purpose, it is acknowledged by the registered provider that refurbishment works has commenced since December 2023 and are ongoing.
This included the following:
 - passageways were free of obstacles.
 - electrical sockets were safe.
 - safety devices were used on windows and doors including visibility strips at a child’s height.
 - there were no trailing flexes within the children’s reach.
 - All areas, both indoors and outdoors, were free from glass, rubbish, sharp or hazardous items and visible debris, and were in a clean condition.
- (c) There was natural lighting with windows in each playroom.
- The playrooms were ventilated by means of the openable windows and doors and a new heat recovery ventilation system.
 - The artificial lighting provided was shatter proof.
- (d) Cleaning equipment was safely stored away / inaccessible from the children.
- (e) Adequate and suitable sanitary facilities were provided.
- The pre-school service had a total of three designated children’s toilets and three designated children’s wash hand basins. Additionally, there was a sink in the Wobbler/ Toddler playroom and two sinks in the Montessori playroom.
 - There was one nappy changing area with an airtight sealable bin for the storage of nappies.

- There was one designated adult toilet with one wash hand basin.
- Liquid soap dispensers and paper hand towels in designated dispensers were within easy access to a pre-school child.
- Foot pedal lidded bins were provided in the sanitary area.

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) Since the last inspection, a new designated sleep room had been installed in the Wobbler/ Toddler playroom.

The inspectors measured the playroom and the sleep room.

Room Names	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
Wobbler Toddler playroom	32 m ²	Full Day Care	12 months to 24 months	0 to 1 year	3.5 square metres	1: 3	9
				1 to 2 years	2.8 square metres	1: 5	11
New designated Sleep room	12m ²	Full Day Care					