

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK077
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Name of Service:	Deenside Early Years Ltd
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Address of Service:	Castlecomer Community Childcare Centre, Kilkenny Street, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 WK2N
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Name of Registered Provider:	Martin Rafter
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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

Deenside Early Years Ltd. is a community childcare service located in the town of Castlecomer in north county Kilkenny. The service, which operates from a designated secure area within the town's community hall, provides full day, part-time and sessional childcare services for children aged from 0 to 6 years of age.

The service operates between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 hours, Monday to Friday for 50 weeks of the year.

There are five classrooms available in the service, a wobbler room and toddler room with adjacent sleep rooms and nappy changing facilities on the ground floor. There is a designated kitchen area for the storage and preparation of meals with an adjacent dining room located on the ground floor.

On the first floor there are three senior classrooms- the "Red" preschool classroom, the "Yellow" preschool classroom and a third "Activity" room. There are two outdoor play areas located at the back of the service which can be accessed via a back exit door and directly from the wobbler and toddler rooms.

Staffing

The service is governed by a voluntary board of management chaired by the registered provider. The registered provider does not work in the service. There are 16 staff members employed in the service including the designated person in charge and a dedicated chef. All staff members who as part of their role in the service is to work directly with the children in attendance held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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 assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations 15, 24.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the wobbler, toddler, “Red” preschool room and “Yellow” preschool room. The “Activity” room was not in operation on the day of inspection.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(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) The designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (b) The staff roster demonstrated that either the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, or both were always onsite while the service was in operation.
- (c) A clear outline of the management of the structure was displayed in the service, identifying the lines of authority, accountability, the roles, and responsibilities of individual staff members in the service.
- (2) Staff files for 16 staff members and a file for the registered provider were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the 16 staff members, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member and for the registered provider. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting disclosure certificates were available for each of two staff members employed in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) There was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the preschool children attending the service throughout the inspection.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed throughout the inspection.

In the morning there were 25 preschool children aged 1 to 5 years being cared for by 10 staff members. The designated person in charge and a relief staff member who was rostered from 11:30 hours were also available to provide help or relief in the classrooms for staff breaks and lunches.

In the afternoon there were 20 children aged 1 to 5 years of age cared for by 6 staff members.

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the designated person in charge and the staff the inspector was assured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of preschool children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each preschool child.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Each classroom was resourced with suitable and age-appropriate furniture and clear identifiable interest areas to stimulate and encourage the children’s play and learning. Appropriate play materials and well-resourced open-ended materials supplemented the thematic areas such as the kitchen/home areas, construction areas, reading areas, art and creativity areas, soft play and sensory areas.

Two outdoor areas were secured with a high cement wall and there was a rota to ensure that each classroom had two opportunities daily to access the outdoor play area. Both areas were sheltered by an overhang to shield the children from inclement weather and to provide shade during hot weather.

Opportunities for imaginary, sensory and physically challenging play were provided in the outdoor area which contained sand and water play, playhouses and an outdoor kitchen as well as climbing tyres and balance beams.

(1)(b) Soft inviting rest areas were provided in each of the four classrooms in operation on the day of inspection. These rest areas were observed to be suitable and appropriate to the age range of the children in each classroom. There were two sleep rooms available in the service, one sleep room adjacent to the wobbler classroom and another sleep room available for the toddlers adjacent to the toddler classroom.

The wobbler sleep contained four standard cots and two floor beds which were designated appropriately to the children according to their ages and sleep requirements.

The staff informed the inspector that there was also a supply of stackable beds and suitable fitted sheets with cellular blankets available for any child in the senior pre-school rooms upstairs, who was observed to need a nap or sleep while attending the service. The stackable beds were placed in a quiet area of the classroom to create a safe and comfortable area for the children to sleep.

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 designated kitchen in the service with an adjacent dining area for the children from the senior classrooms to go to have their hot meals. A chef was present for the management of food supplies and preparation of the children's meals.

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 childcare service was located at the back of the community hall. The service entrance was secured with a keypad system at the main entrance door, to prevent any unauthorised person from entering the childcare service and to prevent any child exiting the service unsupervised. The outdoor play area was secured with a high twelve-foot wall and a secured wooden gate.

All cleaning products and equipment had a designated storage area out of the reach of the children.

Infection Control:

There was an adequate number of toilet and nappy changing facilities provided in the service to meet the needs of the children attending the service.

Each toilet unit had child height handwash basins, supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

The older children were observed to use the toilet and hand washing facilities independently, while staff supported and assisted the younger children as needed.

Staff were observed to support and prompt the children to wash their hands correctly after using the toilet, nappy-changing, after messy and outdoor play, and before snack times.

Staff were observed to carry out nappy changing procedures in line with the service's nappy changing policy and in adherence with the service's hand washing and infection control policy.

Administration of Medication:

The staff were well informed of the procedures to be followed in administering any type of medication to a child, in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Child centred plans were available for inspection for any child who may require emergency medication in the event of a medical emergency.

The staff demonstrated that they were well informed of any child in their care who had additional medical needs and of any child centred treatment plans that they had been devised in partnership with the child's parents/guardians.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were observed to physically check any sleeping child every ten minutes, in line with the service's safe sleep policy. The inspector observed that a staff member stayed in the sleep room when children were asleep on the floor beds or stackable beds to supervise and monitor the children.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place for the safe execution of any planned outings for the pre-school children away from the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - (iii) an employee, or*
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The staff in each of the three classrooms demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's daily attendance and departure times from the service were recorded.
- (3)(a)(b) The staff ensured that no other person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without their entry being approved by an employee. All authorised visitors to the service were required to record the date of entry, their name, contact number, reason for entry, check in and out times on the visitors record book located at the main entrance.

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)
There were five staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, there was at least two staff members with FAR training present. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection.
- (2)(a)(b)
There was first aid box in the kitchen and in the main office/ reception area. Each classroom also had a first aid bag stored in an easily accessible and identifiable position.
The first aid contents were adequate, and records demonstrated that the first aid contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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) The following fire safety records were maintained:
- (a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 30 May 2025.

(b) A written record was maintained of the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and the smoke alarm system in the service. The last maintenance check of fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in June 2025 and for the fire alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 03 July 2025.

(2) The fire safety records were available and open for inspection by the early years inspector or by a parent / employee on request.

(3) The designated person in charge demonstrated that records were maintained for the five years prior to inspection.

(4) The registered provider ensured that a fire evacuation procedure notice was clearly displayed in the main entrance hall.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a full day childcare service for up to 78 pre-school children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.