

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY057
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Name of Service:	IRD Waterville Early Years Centre
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Address of Service:	Waterville Community Centre, Spunkane, Waterville, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V23 Y892
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Annette Marian O' Neill
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/08/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	Ms. O'Reilly
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	N/A
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Description of service

IRD Waterville Early Years Centre is an established early years service that first opened in 1996. It is a community-based service that provides, full day care, part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate a maximum of 50 children aged between 0 to 6 years and for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily opening hours are from 08:30 to 17:30 hours each day Monday to Friday

IRD Waterville Early Years Centre operates from a community building located in the coastal town of Waterville, Co Kerry. The service has two care rooms and the children have access to the community hall. There was only one of the playrooms in operation on day of inspection. There are adequate toilets and nappy changing facilities. There is a separate sleep room and kitchen. The children have access to outdoor play areas beside the premise. There is ample car parking for the children's safe arrival and departure to the service with their families.

Staffing

At time of inspection, there were nine adults associated with the service, this includes the registered provider who is not serviced based. The eight childcare professionals who work directly with the children hold a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent qualification, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

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 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*

(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 person in charge and a deputy to deputise as required.

(b) The deputy was present when the inspector arrived at the premise on the day of the unannounced inspection. The person in charge came later and both were than present throughout the inspection process.

(2)

Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for 9 adults. This included the registered provider.

(a) There were 13 validated references on file from past employers.

(b) There were 5 validated references available from sources other than previous employers.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of each of the 9 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) A police vetting record was available on file for 3 of the adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more, while over the age of 18 years.

(4) The 8 adults who worked directly with the children all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, or an equivalent qualification, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

During the period of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance.

(2) Taking into consideration the age range of the children present in the service and the duration of their stay, the adult to child ratios were maintained in line with the required ratios, as follows:

Creche Room

There were 11 children in attendance in the morning. There were 5 children aged between 1 and 2 years. There were 5 children present aged between 2 and 3-years. There was 1 child present aged between 3 and 6 years with 5 adults in attendance There were 8 children in attendance in the afternoon with three adults in attendance.

Playschool Room

The playschool room was not in operation at time of inspection.

(8)

(a) On review of the staff roster there are two adults present at all times when the 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.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i)

A sample of 10 of the children's registration forms were reviewed and were found to contain all of the elements of information as required by Regulation 15(1) (a) to (i) inclusive.

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;*
- (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

(h) The service had a register to record the children’s attendance on a daily basis. The records indicated the arrival and departure time of each child on a daily basis in the service.

(i) On review of the weekly staff roster, the record indicated the time the staff commenced and finished in the service.

(k) There was an Accident and Incident book in the service. A sample of the accidents and incidents records on file were reviewed. All accidents and incidents records were signed by the parent and staff members. The parent/guardian received a duplicated signed copy at collection time following the accident /incident pertaining to their child.

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 staff members were observed speaking with the children during snack time and using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction with the children which promoted a relaxed atmosphere. Meals were observed being eaten in the playroom with the younger children sitting in highchairs in a circular companionable position. Bibs were provided to protect clothes. The older children were seated at the table.

- It was observed that children’s cues for tiredness were addressed. Children were prepared for sleep in a kind and caring manner; tight clothing was removed. The requirement for sleep was child led and all children were observed sleeping in suitable sleep equipment during the inspection.
- Children’s coats and their bags and personal belongings were stored on low hooks at the entrance lobby to encourage independent dressing.
- The adults were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children’s efforts were readily acknowledged and when children were calmly assisted to resolve minor conflicts.
- Children’s hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. The staff members were observed to supervise and assist where required each of the children when hand washing and hand drying, and the children were supported and encouraged prior to eating, after nappy changing and toileting.
- The service provided ample clear floor space for the children to enjoy free play, planned activities, meals and socialisation in a supervised manner.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The creche was child friendly, bright, laid out with materials largely accessible to the children.
- The creche room had some openable windows which allowed for natural light and ventilation.
- There were an adequate number of highchairs available for the younger children and child sized tables and chairs for the older children.
- The shelving was set low to display play materials which were mostly plastic and wooden in nature and easily washable. The low shelving and open containers on the floor facilitated easy access to the materials by the children.
- For the younger children in attendance, there were a selection of age-appropriate equipment such as, a selection of books, shape sorters, activity centres, pull along toys, handheld toys for example farm and zoo animals, sound making materials and construction blocks.
- There was a selection of tabletop activities and games for the older children to encourage companionable interaction. There were cars and trucks, different sized blocks and a variety of art and craft materials.
- A fine motor skills area, a home corner suitably furnished with dolls, buggies, dress up and small utensils to prompt imagination and pretend play.
- Books were displayed in a stand-alone rack unit at child height.
- Play materials in general were found to be in a good state of repair with no pinch points or sharp edges.

- There was a soft seating area, staff informed that this area allowed a child to opt out of play activities and relax if they so wished.
- Walls of the care rooms were decorated with birthday charts, family photographs and posters and the children’s arts and crafts.
- The creche children had access to their own secured outdoor play area and the older children had access to playground and garden areas.
- In the outdoor play area, there were ride on and push toys and a slide to encourage the children to master gross motor skill play. There was a mud kitchen, playhouse and a sand area with accompanying play equipment to encourage imagination and pretend play.

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 children appeared to enjoy the nutritious food provided by their parents/guardians and were afforded ample time to eat and drink at a relaxed pace.
- All of the snacks and meals observed being eaten on the day were healthy, sufficient and nutritious. There was a hot meal provided by the parents/guardians and reheated for the children attending the full day care service.
- The children had access to their own water bottles so that they could help themselves to drinks when they were thirsty.
- The children were provided with appropriate cutlery and crockery at snack and mealtimes.

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:

- Cleaning agents were stored out of the children's reach.
- First aid box was appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- Water temperatures at the wash hand basins were thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C.
- The staff members bags and belonging were stored out of reach of the children.
- The designated outdoor play area beside the service was adequately secured, fenced and gated.
- The kitchenette was not accessible to the children so they could not access any hazardous materials such as sharp knives or cleaning products.
- There were no visible flexes or electric cabling observed.

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities were available in the service for the children in attendance on day of inspection. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were in place. Handwashing by the children was observed before mid-morning snack and lunch time meal and after nappy changing and using the toilet.
- The children had access to a sufficient number of toilets, nappy changing facilities and wash hand basins which were clean and in a good state of repair.
- There were step ups and toilet seats available for the children's comfort and safety.
- The children's soothers were suitably stored in individual plastic containers when not in use.
- Personal waste including used tissues, and all cleaning waste was appropriately disposed of in foot operated pedal bins in the service.
- Non-contact bin was available for the storage of used nappies.
- The children nappy changing toiletries were situated within labelled baskets beside the nappy changing unit.
- In general, the playroom, toilets and nappy changing facility beside the creche room were visibly clean on day of inspection. There were weekly cleaning schedules on display.

Safe Sleep:

- A designated sleep room was located beside the playroom. There were 3 standard cots. Each of the mattresses was fitted with a waterproof mattress cover. There were a sufficient number of stackable beds available for the children over the age of 2 years that required a sleep.
- The younger children were observed sleeping in the sleep room. Part of the creche room was converted into a sleep room after lunch where some of the children over two were observed sleeping on stacking beds.
- It was observed that sleeping children had ten-minute physical observations conducted, recording position, colour and breathing of the child.
- The air temperature of the sleep room registered at 20°Celsius.
- Individual clean linen was available for each sleep equipment. There was an adequate distance observed between each cot when children were asleep in the sleep room and between the stacking beds when children were sleeping in the creche room on day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire Safety:

- Emergency fire exit routes were obstructed by gate barriers in the creche room on day of inspection which may delay a prompt exit in the event of a fire.

A referral has been sent to the Fire Safety Department in Kerry County Council.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire Safety:

- In the written reply the registered provider has stated that the service is awaiting the in-person visit from the Kerry County Council Fire Officer. The service will be guided and will follow whatever advise is received on this issue. The Early Years Inspectorate has received an acknowledgement from the Fire Safety Department in Kerry County Council regarding the fire safety referral.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire Safety:

- The written statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The service will inform the Early Years Inspector of the advice received following the visit from the Fire Officer. The service stated that if they have not heard from the Fire Officer by the Autumn midterm break, The service will

contact Kerry County Council Fire Safety Department. This issue remains outstanding and will be reviewed on the next 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

(1) There were staff working in the service on day of inspection that had current certified First Aid Responder certificate (FAR). A number of staff are booked to attend First Aid Responder training on the 6 September 2025

(2) (a) There was a sufficiently stocked first aid box available in the creche room, which was safety stored out of reach of children.

(b) At all times when the service was in operation, first aid supplies were accessible to the adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 30 July 2025
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced on the 27 March 2025. The emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on the 22 May 2025.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured, with insurance for 50 children valid until 27 March 2026. The records detailed the category of service covered, full day care. The name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.