

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LD003
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Name of Service:	ABC Minard
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Address of Service:	Knockmartin, Newtown Forbes, Longford, Co. Longford
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Eircode:	N39 NN93
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Name of Registered Provider:	Collette Brennan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM	44
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan and F. Maher.
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

ABC Minard is registered as a full day care service with a capacity for 85 pre-school children aged between 0 – 6 years. The service is open from 8:00am – 18:00 hours, Monday to Friday. The service is part of a multiple operated by an independent provider. A registered school age childcare service is also provided at the service.

The service is located in two adjacent detached premises, in the rural location of Minard close to the village of Newtown Forbes, Co. Longford. There are six care rooms, a sleep room, laundry room, a kitchen, an office and a staff room at the rear of the premises. Spacious outdoor play areas are at the rear of the premises. On the day of the inspection five of the six care rooms were operational.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service. Eighteen staff are employed by the service.

On the day of the inspection, seventeen staff members were present. Thirteen including the adult designated to provide support to the care rooms as needed were working directly with the children, the designated person in charge, and the cook were also present.

All staff working directly with children hold a qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Two staff were working directly with school age care children. A maintenance person is also employed by 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
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under.

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1),(2),(8)(a) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

however, on inspection additional non-compliances were identified under:

- Regulation 19(1)(a) – Health, Welfare and Development of Child.
- Regulation 29(c)(d) – Premises.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under

- Regulation 19(1)(b) – Health, welfare and development of child.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby, Junior Toddler and Senior Toddler rooms.

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.

Additional Information

1. A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child was issued to the registered provider by the Early Years Inspector on 15 July 2025.

The written response received by the Early Years Inspector on 15 July 2025 from the person in charge on behalf of the registered provider in relation to the immediate action notice was accepted. See body of report for details.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge 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)(b) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required, both remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The files of twenty-six staff including the registered provider were reviewed.

(2)
(a)(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were available in respect of twenty-six adults employed whose staff files were reviewed.
(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for twenty-six adults working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for seven adults who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months whose records were reviewed.

(4) Twenty adults employed and working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher or a recognised equivalent qualification 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.

(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 were forty-seven children attending the service and they were supervised directly by thirteen adults. This included the adult available to provide relief to the care rooms as needed.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

(8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) **Basic needs of children:**

1. Infant formula was being reconstituted by the staff members. This practice is not recommended by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland guidance note 22 which states that it is not recommended that child day-care facilities prepare prepared infant formula for the children in their care.

This was a non-compliance following inspection conducted on 3 and 6 November 2023. The corrective action submitted by the registered provider following the inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Physical and material environment:

2. The physical and material environment in the Baby room requires review to meet developmental requirements of the age group attending which was 7 months to 2 years. Additional equipment such as soft climbing cushions, a crawling tunnel, simple peg board puzzles, stacking toys and shape sorter puzzles, sensory mats, push/pull equipment, treasure baskets with natural and open-ended materials, rattles and musical instruments, and a mixture of books and opportunities for sensory play. Age-appropriate books such as material type books with touch and feel textured pages, small hardback picture books, more lift the flap books, books with peek a boo pages, musical and nursery rhymes, books with hand puppets to support story time interaction with the children will support the children's developing language, social and emotional skills as well as stimulating their imagination and curiosity.

The home corner with the two kitchen play units required more props for example, tea sets, pots and pans, dolls, cot/buggies to prompt make believe and symbolic play and learning for the older children in the Baby room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Parents were informed that this is no longer happening in the service.
2. The baby room has been transformed to a room that is suitable for the children's age range in the room. More equipment has been added to the kitchen area. There is also more soft play equipment for children's physical

activities. Push along toys have been reintroduced. We have created more defined areas of play and reintroduced tractors, farm equipment, stacking blocks and puzzle toys. Babies have more access to sensory and touch and feel books. We have also reintroduced our treasure box. Our cosy area has more soft toys such as little baby dolls. We have also reintroduced our small activity table where there are shape sorters. When children have reached the crawling or walking stage the room will be reassessed to see what equipment is needed for the children for their level of development.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Copy of message sent to parents.
2. Photographs of the Baby room environment.

Summary Comment

The written response and photographic evidence submitted by the manager on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 19.

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 entry to the two buildings had an electromagnetic locking system which was controlled by a key pad entry code known to staff members only. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of used tissues. Facilities were available for nappy changing. Cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be clean and tidy.

Administration of Medication:

Medicine was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. The staff members were familiar with required practices when administering medication in the service. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if required.

Safe Sleep:

Eleven cots and nine low level beds were available for children who required sleep. The staff members demonstrated knowledge of the care of sleeping children in response to questions asked by the inspector. It was observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children. This included the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in their care.

A rest area was available for the children in each care room if they wished to take a break from activities and rest.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The internal fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

The service does not conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The gate into the play area outside the Baby room from the car park was not secured to prevent unauthorised entry on 14 July 2025.
2. The inspector gained entry to the Baby room from this play area as the entrance door was unlocked on 14 July 2025.

A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child was issued to the registered provider by the Early Years Inspector on 15 July 2025.

3. The method of indoor risk assessments required to be reviewed as daily indoor environmental risk assessments were not available. It is acknowledged that risk assessments for various hazards in the service have been completed however the date completed on the document for 'risk assessment for entry to ABC' was June 2022.

Infection Control:

4. The sanitary areas attached to Baby, ECCE 3 and Senior Toddler rooms were used for the for storage of equipment and resources including low level beds, a first aid box and a container with medication which was not appropriate for infection control purposes.

5. The sanitary area attached to the Baby room was used by the staff members to access the sleep room rather than the sleep room door on the corridor outside the Baby room. This was not suitable from an infection control perspective.
6. The nappy change practices required to be reviewed as it was observed that the single use disposable apron was not removed following the bagging up of the soiled nappy and removal of used gloves. Soiled nappies, used aprons and used disposable gloves need to be disposed of at the same time following removal of the old nappy for best infection control practices.

Safe Sleep:

7. The environmental temperature in the sleep room was not maintained between 16° - 20° Celsius as evidenced by the following observations:

The temperature was 24° Celsius at 10:45 am. The windows were open to allow air to circulate, and a large fan was already switched on. The temperature was rechecked at 11:34 am and it was 23.4° Celsius; at 12:48 hours it was 25° Celsius, there were three staff settling and supervising the children and an additional air cooler was sourced to manage the environmental temperature. The temperature was rechecked at 14:16 hours and it was 22° Celsius.

A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child was issued to the registered provider by the Early Years Inspector on 15 July 2025.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A new lower lock has been added to the gate which is not accessible from the car park.
2. The staff in the Baby room will check the door throughout the day to ensure it is secured.
3. The staff have been updated on the care room risk assessment form. The risk assessment form will be checked by management to ensure they are being checked and filled out correctly.

Infection Control:

4. Sanitary areas in baby room, Ecce 3, and senior toddlers have been cleared of storage.
5. A new low-level sink has been involved in the Baby room sanitary area. A paper towel dispenser has been installed in the sanitary area which accommodates the nappy changing facility for the Baby room.
6. The nappy changing policy has been updated. A staff meeting was held and a demonstration of a nappy change and the step by step the procedure was explained. The nappy changing policy will be put up beside all changing units. Regular checks on staff carrying out nappy changing procedures.

Safe Sleep:

- Two air conditioning units have been purchased for the sleep room and the senior toddler room. The two air conditioning units are switched on each morning and are set permanently at a cooling fan setting, this setting makes sure that the rooms do not go above 20° Celsius.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photograph

Infection Control:

- Photographs.
- Photograph
- Photograph

Safe Sleep:

- Invoice for purchase of air conditioning units.

Summary Comment

The written response, documentary and photographic evidence submitted by the manager on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23. This area of practice will be assessed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- 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.*
- Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.*
- A registered provider shall ensure that-*
 - no person other than-*
 - pre-school child attending the service,*
 - a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - an employee, or*
 - 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)(a) The person in charge ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.

(2) Not applicable.

(3) (a)(b) The person in charge ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained. The inspectors' visit to the service was documented in the visitor's book on arrival.

(4) The person in charge confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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) Staff members present were trained in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)

(a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the care rooms inspected. Further supplies were stored in the entrance hallway of the building on the left-hand side.

(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children were available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of 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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was 28 June 2025.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm was last serviced on 15 May 2025.
 - (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The children were observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection by the adults caring for them both indoors in their care rooms, while using the sanitary area, on the stairs, during transitions to the outdoors and in the outdoor area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2026. The insurance provided cover for 89 children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

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

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Non-Compliance Information

- (c)
1. The environmental temperature in the five care rooms on the day of the inspection was not maintained between 18° - 22° Celsius. It is acknowledged that when this non-compliance was brought to the attention of the designated person in charge, immediate corrective actions were put in place using fans and air coolers were used to reduce the environmental temperatures. Despite the corrective actions the temperatures remained between 23° – 25° Celsius throughout the day.

A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child was issued to the registered provider by the Early Years Inspector on 15 July 2025.

2. In the Senior Toddler room, there were two circular ceiling lights and two dormer windows providing light in the room, however the light available was dull and not bright enough for children’s table top activities.

- (d)
3. The paintwork on the walls in sleep room, sanitary area baby room, and the Baby room was observed to be worn, peeling and stained. Holes were observed on the walls in the sleep room which required to be repaired and repainted.
 4. The inner high-density chipboard around the edges of a table in ECCE 2 room was exposed because the protective covering was missing. This table was used by the children for meals and table top activities.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (c)
1. More air coolers/ air conditioning units are in place. The heating system has been permanently turned off until the colder weather returns.
 2. Two new ceiling lights have been installed in the room, providing a brighter environment.
- (d)
3. The walls have been freshly painted, repairs and holes have been filled and also painted.
 4. Three new tables have been ordered for the ECCE 2 room.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Invoice for purchase of air conditioning units / air coolers.
2. Invoice for ceiling lights purchased.
3. Photographs of paintwork.
4. Invoice for purchase of three tables.

Summary Comment

The written response, documentary and photographic evidence submitted by the manager on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 29.