

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH019
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Cooley Community Playgroup Ltd
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Monksland, Carlingford, Carlingford, Co. Louth
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A91 DD1F
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Ann McCloskey
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	01/05/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	51	PM	8
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. Flood
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
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### Description of service

Cooley Community Playgroup Ltd has been operating as a community-based childcare service since 2004. The service provides sessional and part-time care and education to pre-school children aged 2 years – 6 years. The service caters for a maximum of 58 pre-school children and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates from Monday – Friday 09.00am – 2.00pm.

The service is conducted from a community building in a coastal setting in Co. Louth and provides three care rooms namely rooms 1,2 & 3. An enclosed outdoor play area which is available to the rear of the building. The children also have access to the community hall within the main community building. Ancillary accommodation consists of sanitary facilities, a kitchen area, a sensory room off Room 1, an office and storage areas.

### Staffing

There are 14 staff employed in the service. This includes the registered provider and 11 childcare staff who work directly with the preschool children and 2 members of staff who are engaged on a community employment scheme to carry out cleaning duties.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance, as a result, the scope of the inspection included Rooms 2 & 3.

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 would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named deputy person to deputise as required. The deputy person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and was present for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider was also present in the service providing relief on the day of inspection and was observed working directly with the preschool children.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2)(a) & (b)

There were 14 staff files presented for inspection including the registered provider, childcare staff and staff who were engaged on a community employment scheme. The following were observed:

- There were 2 written references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all members of staff including the registered provider. All references were validated as required.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all 14 staff members in the service. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 13 out of 14 files reviewed.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented on the day of inspection, international police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the registered provider and 11 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school children had at least the minimum required Level 5 childcare qualification.

### 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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2) On arrival to the premises at 10.50am there were 3 rooms in operation namely; Room 1,2 and 3.

The following adult to child ratios were observed on arrival:

- **Room 1:**

There were 18 preschool children aged between 3-4 years with 5 members of staff.

- **Room 2**

There were 19 children aged 3-4 years being cared for by 3 staff members.

- **Room 3:**

There were 14 children aged 3-4 years with 3 members of staff that included the registered provider and the deputy person in charge.

The adult:child ratios were correct.

(8)(a) Following a discussion with the deputy person in charge and a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rota and children’s attendance records this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times

## Part IV – Information and Records

### Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

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

*(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

### Non-Compliance Information

Documentary evidence of a staff roster on a daily basis was not available for inspection. All staff present in the service were not included on the ‘once off’ roster on display.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff rota has been updated and all relevant staff assigned to each room. When a member of staff needs cover, the staff rota will be updated. The Staff Rota will be updated when a staff member leaves or needs to be covered.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of a staff rota and staff attendance record, including staff arrival and departure times and cover for break times.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 has been addressed.

### 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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

### Compliance Information

There were 3 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection namely Rooms 1, 2 and 3. A sampling process was used to assess compliance and as such Rooms 2 & 3 are the subject of this report.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider facilitated each child's learning and development:

#### Basic needs:

- Healthy food and snacks were observed to be available to children throughout the service. Parents provided all snacks and meals for the children which were stored in fridges. Drinking water was readily available for the children. Independence was promoted
- Children's personal care needs were met by the staff caring for them e.g., cleaning of noses and faces, hair tidied and hand washing.
- The toilet trained children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children in the various rooms after toileting.
- Nappies/pants were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff.
- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children in all the rooms. The staff were observed down on the floor with the children or seated at the tables during lunch time, circle time and tabletop activities and were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner "...what's your favourite song? wind the bobbin up... that's mine too..."

- The children had free movement in the care rooms and all children had a change of environment to the outdoor areas located on the premises.

### Supporting Relationships

- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing interactions by all staff. A key worker system was in place in the service, and this was on display in the care rooms. It was observed that each staff member had a small group of children assigned to them and the key person took the lead in supporting that child's transitions, recording their daily activities,
- The staff reported that communication with parents is mainly conducted verbally at collection and drop off. A small messaging service is also used to relay messages and photographs about the children's care needs and activities in the service. A number of children have a documented daily record book "A record of my day" that details all about the child's day including, meals, toileting and activities.
- Scrap books are collated for each child in the service and provide information relating to the "voice of the child", art pieces, learning records and photographs of activities.
- The staff when questioned report that regular meetings happen in the service between the staff, room leaders and the person in charge. This supports communication between staff and provides for support and development of good relationships.

### 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.*

*(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-*

*(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,*

### Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft seating and mats provided, should a child need to take a break from activities during the day.
- A number of individual day beds suitable for children aged over 2 years were available.
- A purpose developed sensory room was available directly off Room 1. This room is accessed by all children attending the service if required and contains soft mats, cushions, sensory lighting, mirrors and scratch mats.

(3)(a) A large spacious outdoor area was available on the premises and is subdivided into a variety of areas of interest:

- **Area 1 “The Playground”**: Is an enclosed area to the rear of the building, with a safety matted surface. A wide variety of play equipment is available including, fixed equipment such as a climbing frame, see-saw and a slide. Other pieces of equipment include a mud kitchen with supporting equipment, dolls and buggies, ride-on pieces, large wooden blocks, planted tyres, and a bark mulch digging area. A number of fence mounted activity toys were also available including a large blackboard, and a wooden clock and days of the week/month clock.
- **Areas 2&3**: Are enclosed areas with an artificial grass surface. The two areas are separated by netting and can be used as one large area or 2 separate areas. A variety of play equipment is available in both areas including ride-on pieces and dolls and buggies.
- Although not observed during the inspection the children also have access to an indoor activities hall.

### 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.*

### Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service based on the following observations made during the inspection:

### General Safety

1. Garda vetting was available for all 14 staff members including the registered provider. However, 1 of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

### Infection Control:

2. Nappy changing procedures were not being carried out in accordance with the services Nappy changing policy. For example, no apron was observed in use during nappy changing procedures. In addition, no antibacterial spray was available in the sanitary area to wipe the nappy changing mat before and after each nappy change.
3. The nappy changing mat observed in use in sanitary area was in a defective condition and unsuitable for use. It was cracked, small holes were evident, and the foam was exposed. This does not allow for effective cleaning practices and is therefore an infection control risk.
4. The small pedal operated bin observed in use for the disposal of soiled nappies in the sanitary area was unsuitable. The bin was observed overflowing and therefore was not sealed or lined as is required for the appropriate disposal of nappies.

### Fire Safety:

5. The maintenance records available for the firefighting equipment on the premises detailed 02/2024 as the last maintenance check. This is outside the best practice guidelines which recommends that all firefighting equipment must be maintained at intervals not exceeding 12 months.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Actions

1. One staff members garda vetting has been updated. A spread sheet with all staff members garda vetting dates and when they need to be updated has been developed.
2. Aprons and antibacterial spray are now stored in the unit and are used at every nappy changing. Staff have been asked to read and familiarise themselves with nappy changing policy.
- 3&4 New mat on the nappy changing unit & new nappy bin purchased.
5. Maintenance has been carried out. Maintenance service has been told they must service every 12 months.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary and photographic evidence.

Updated Garda Vetting disclosure

Maintenance records for firefighting equipment.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will require assessment at the next inspection.

## 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 record was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service. Fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 30/04/2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on 02/2024 and the fire alarm on 14/03/2025.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.