

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK014
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Name of Service:	Athea National School Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Athea NS, Athea, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 F226
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Gleeson
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, 2 nd Floor, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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

Athea National School, Pre-school is a community pre-school service located in a classroom within the Athea National School. It opened in 2009. It offers a morning sessional service from 9.00am to 12.00pm and an afternoon sessional service from 12.05pm to 3.05pm, Monday to Friday.

The service operates from a large well-resourced classroom in the school. Sanitary facilities are located next door to the pre-school room. A well-resourced outdoor play space and a sheltered outdoor area is available each day at the service.

Staffing

The registered provider is the chairperson of Athea National School, Board of Management. There is a designated person in charge who is responsible for running the pre-school service. There are 3 additional staff employed at the service. All staff have the required childcare 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) The designated person in charge was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available to deputise if needed.

(b) The staff roster indicated that the manager or their deputy were always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written references were available for each adult working at the service. All references were validated.

(b) All references were from each person's previous employers or a reputable source such as a previously attended school or college.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all adults working at 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 not required for any adult working at the service.

(4) All adults working at the service had an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1) The manager of the service ensured that the correct number of adults were rostered to work at the service each morning and each afternoon
- (3) On the day of the inspection there were 3 adults present with 16 preschool children for the morning session. There were 4 adults present with 14 preschool children for the afternoon session. The adult/child ratio was correct for both sessions.

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

A healthy eating policy was implemented at the service, ensuring the provision of nutritious snacks to children daily. Parents provided a range of sandwiches, crackers, cheese, yogurts and fruit options in children's packed lunches. Staff sat with children while eating and mealtimes were observed to be sociable occasions. All perishable foods were safely stored in a fridge each day until required. Childrens drinks were removed from their bags on arrival and stored on a low shelf where they were easily accessible at all times.

Toilet facilities and nappy changing facilities were located close to the preschool room. Handwashing facilities were situated next to the changing unit and the toilets, and foot pedal-operated lidded bins were available for safe disposal of paper handtowels.

Lots of low-level soft furnishings were accessible in the relaxation area of the room, allowing children the opportunity to rest each day if required. A well-equipped outdoor area facilitated lots of outdoor play. A sheltered space ensured children got to play outside regardless of all weather conditions.

Physical and Material Environment

The preschool room was well designed to meet the individual needs of all children in the space. Lots of low-level tables and chairs provided opportunities for tabletop activities and for dining at snack time. Age-appropriate educational posters and children's artwork were exhibited on all walls of the room. Tuff trays with sensory

materials and open-ended play items were available. A large home corner facilitated lots of imaginary play occupying one corner of the room. A large art easel with paint pots, brushes and paper facilitated lots of craft time. Room layout and designs were rearranged depending on each child's evolving interests and their stage of development.

Work on creating a sensory, quiet room was ongoing at the service. This room will enable small group activities and facilitate one on one time for staff and children in a low stimulus environment if required.

Outdoor play areas were directly accessible from the preschool room. The playground at the rear of the premises was enclosed with high walls and timber fencing. Synthetic grass and rubber matting covered all outdoor surfaces, thereby reducing the risk of injury while children play outdoors. Lots of ride down toys, low level slides, swings and hammock baskets helped promote gross motor development. Picnic benches allowed children space to bring tabletop activities outdoors in favorable weather conditions.

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 external entrance door and the internal classroom door were locked and safely secured.
- Safe storage well out of children's reach was available for the cleaning agents and cleaning equipment used in the service.
- The person in charge ensured that complete and accurate daily records of attendance were kept for all children and adults present in the service.
- Fire doors leading from the preschool were clear and unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- A cleaning programme was available to ensure a high standard of hygiene was maintained in all areas of the preschool.
- The playrooms and sanitary areas were adequately ventilated by natural forms of ventilation.

Administration of Medication:

- A policy was in place at the service to ensure safety with the administration of all medicines at the preschool. Staff were familiar with the procedures outlined in the policy.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service to ensure all children were familiar with the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Records were available to show that fire drills were carried out monthly.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises with the most recent service having been completed within the calendar year.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous positions on the premises.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

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

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The front door to the school was locked and all who entered the building were checked in by a member of staff. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas. A high standard of operational hygiene was noted in the premises.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets and wash hand basins available at the service. A nappy changing facility was available if required.