

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS010
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Name of Service:	Naomh Áine Naíonra
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Address of Service:	Naomh Áine Garoon, Mountmellick, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 HD37
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Culleton
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	NA
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla, Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
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

Naomh Áine Naíonra is a private sessional service providing care and education to preschool children aged between two and six years old. The preschool is attached to the domestic dwelling of the registered provider, in the town of Mountmellick, Co Laois. The service operates from 09:30 – 12:30pm Monday to Friday. The service consists of three preschool rooms and an office. A secure fenced outdoor play area is provided at the back of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs seven staff in the service. There were six adults present on the day of the inspection including the registered provider and six childcare staff. The registered provider manages oversight of the service and does not work directly with the children. The registered provider and deputy person in charge facilitated the inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under,

- Regulation 9 (1) (a) (b) (c), (2) (a) (b) (c), (4) - Management and recruitment.

- Regulation 11(1),(3) Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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, deputy 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

(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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The deputy person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

The staff members were aware of the management structure, the lines of authority and their roles within the service. The names of the person in charge and the deputy person in charge were displayed on a notice board in the entrance hall.

(2)

Eight staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted:

- (a)
Nine written validated references were available from a previous employer and
- (b)
Seven written validated references were available from a reputable source.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eight staff. With regard to the eight staff members, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4)
Seven employed childcare staff members working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 6 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.*
- (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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.
- (3) The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.
- There were six children being cared directly by two adults in Room 1.
 - There were eight children being cared directly by two adults in Room 2.
 - There were six children being cared directly by two adults in Room 3.

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

(1) (a)

Basic needs

Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches consisted of a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, rice cakes and fruit. Staff sat with the children during snack times and engaged in conversation. Children's drinks were readily available in the preschool rooms throughout the morning session. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversations with each other. Regular hand washing was observed as children washed their hands before meals and after toileting.

Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary.

Supporting relationships

Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Staff were observed to use children's first names, get down to the child's level when providing instructions and use appropriate eye contact during their interactions.

Children's birthdays were displayed on a 'Arm Breithleathanta' birthday chart in each room. 'Mo Chlann' (our family) and 'Mo Phobal' (community) walls were displayed in each room. Photographs of the children and their families, and places of interest in their local community such as the bank and national school were on display. This helped the children feel connected to home and their wider community.

Children took turns being the helper or leader each day. A chart labelled 'Obair na seachtaine' displayed the children's names, photographs and the different job titles, such as bag monitor or bottle monitor. Children in room 1 were observed to take turns cleaning the tables with a basin of water and a cloth before snack time. This facilitated turn taking and helped promote responsibility and independence in the preschool children. Children were observed to enjoy participating in the varies jobs and took pride in their roles.

The staff advised the inspector that information and updates regarding the service are provided to parents at drop off and collection times. Parents are also invited into the service before children commence the preschool year for an open night, as well as during the year for different seasonal events. Learning journals are maintained for the children where artwork, photographs and the children's learning is recorded and goes home with the children at the end of the preschool year. Messages regarding day-to-day updates are shared via an electronic messaging application.

Physical and material environment

The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the session as they chose between activities. Toys and play equipment were positioned on accessible open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play. Areas which promoted role play were available in each preschool room, such as dress up areas with a variety of costumes. School uniforms from the local national school were available for dress up to help prepare the children for moving onto primary school. A range of books and small vinyl couches and chairs were available in the reading area of each preschool room. Sand and water tables with equipment such as funnels, empty bottles and shovels were in each room for messy sensory play. Aprons were available for messy play. Children had a choice of small world houses, kitchen corners with toy pots and food, foam blocks and train tracks.

Children had the opportunity to take the lead and exercise choice in relation to their engagement in activities and in accessing play equipment throughout the session. Children in room 3 were observed engaged in tabletop activities such as playing with homemade modelling dough made by the children and staff with flour, oil and paint. Staff sat at tables or sat on the floor engaging with the children and talking about what the children were creating. Each pre school room had a variety of arts and crafts materials including easels, paint, crayons, glue sticks and paper. Fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, shape sorters and laces and spools for threading. Children had access to an outdoor garden throughout the day where their gross motor development was supported. Outdoor climbing equipment, footballs, goals, slides and tunnels were available to the children. Each child was dressed appropriately for the colder weather and wore outdoor overalls and wellies.

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 entrance door to the pre-school was securely locked and controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access. A door with a window panel allowed staff visibility of any visitors.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children.

Staff advised the inspector they immediately cut any food such as grapes that may pose a choking risk to a child at snack time.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from wall mounted dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands before snack time and after using the bathroom. Pedal bins were available in the preschool rooms and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation as well as openable windows. The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered on the day of inspection. A specific care plan was available for one child who required medication. The staff were familiar with required safe practice when administering medication in the service.

Fire Safety:

Fire exits on the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. The fire assembly point was in the garden at the back of the service. Staff were aware of the exits and route in the event of a fire.

Outing:

Outings are not currently being done by the service however, an Outings policy was in place in the event that the service conducts an outing with the children. Hi visibility jackets with the name and number of the service were available for the children to wear should they go on a nature walk or to the library in the future.

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)
One staff member was qualified in First Aid response (FAR). The FAR qualified staff member was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located in the service.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school 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 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 written record for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 15 October 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment were serviced on 29 January 2025 and the smoke alarms were serviced 01 March 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

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 for twenty-seven children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 31 August 2026.