

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS021		
Name of Service:	The Den Community Childcare		
Address of Service:	Killeshin Community Dev. Ltd., Killeshin, Carlow, Co. Laois		
Eircode:	R93 TC79		
Name of Registered Provider:	Eadaoin Brennan		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	10/02/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM NA
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly R35K1W4		
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.

Description of service

The Den Community childcare offers full day care, part time and sessional care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is currently operating sessional care from 09.15am to 12:15pm Monday to Friday. Full day care is provided during the summer months and midterm periods from 09:00am – 17:00pm. The service operates from a converted school, in the village of Killeshin, Co Laois. The Den has two large preschool rooms, the Red room and Blue room, an onsite kitchen/dining room and an office. An outdoor play area is located to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs eight staff. There were eleven adults present on the day of the inspection. This included six childcare staff, the registered provider, the deputy person in charge, a staff member in the kitchen and two students. The registered provider and deputy person in charge were not assigned to the care rooms but were available onsite to provide support if required. The registered provider works directly with the children and manages oversight of the service. The registered provider facilitated the inspection on 10 February.

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), (2) (a)(b)(c)(d), (4) – Management and recruitment,
- Regulation 11 (1)(2) – 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(1)(a)(b),(4)– Fire safety measures,
- 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, 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
- (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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

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

(2)

Files for eight staff members, the registered provider and two students were reviewed and the following was noted:

- (a)
Eight written validated references were available from a previous employer and
- (b)
Two written validated reference were available from a reputable source. The transition year student had a letter from her school to support the work experience.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults working in the service. In regard to the eight staff, the registered provider and one student, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Garda vetting was not required for a student on work experience placement for 1 week as the student was under 18 years of age.
- (d)
Police vetting was available for two staff members who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.
- (4)
Seven employed childcare staff members and the registered provider, working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (9)(2)(a)
Six written references from a previous employer were not validated in respect of four staff members employed in the service.
One written validated reference was not available in respect of one student.
- (2)(b)
Three written references from a reputable source were not validated in respect of two staff members employed in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- 10 written references have all been validated by the registered provider.
All new staff and students must provide two written references before employment, and these will be validated prior to staff commencing working with the children.
The services Recruitment Policy has been updated.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of 10 written validated references received.

The services recruitment policy received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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 twenty-seven children attending the service being supervised directly by eight adults.
- There were three childcare staff providing direct care to nine children aged between 2-5 years in the Blue room.
 - There were three childcare staff providing direct care to eighteen children aged between 3.5-6 years in the Red room.

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)

On arrival at the service, children were observed eating breakfast provided by the service. Children could choose from a variety of breakfast cereals. A jug of milk and water was offered with breakfast. Children brought in lunches from home. Lunches observed on the day of inspection 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 their lunch bags. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversation with each other. Children were not rushed while eating.

Regular hand washing was observed throughout the morning as children washed their hands before their snack, after toileting and as needed. 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. Children were spoken to using their first names and appropriate eye contact was made. Staff were observed to be affectionate and give hugs when children approached the staff for comfort. Children in the Blue room were observed engaged in imaginative play dressing up and playing with their magic wands that they had made with arts and crafts materials. Staff were observed to offer assistance and sat with a child supporting them with making a wand to join their peers in play.

Learning journals were maintained, with children's artwork and activities which are provided to parents at the end of the year.

A family wall displayed photographs of the children and their families, and photographs of the children titled 'this is me' were positioned at child's level on the wall. This supported the children to feel connected to home. The preschool rooms featured a wall showing the children's birthdays. Birthdays were celebrated in the service. This helps promote a sense of belonging, identity, and community.

The staff advised the inspector that information and updates are provided to parents at drop off and collection times. Further updates are shared via an online 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 at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence and facilitated choice. Areas which promoted imaginative play were available such as a dress up area with a variety of costumes and toy kitchen areas. The Blue room had a purpose-built loft area with dolls and dolls cots on top and a kitchen corner underneath for roleplay. Children's photographs were placed over low level hooks for storage of coats and bags. This enabled children to recognise their own belongings.

Both the red and blue preschool rooms had reading corners with couches, soft cushions and bookshelves for the children to take breaks and rest from activities if required.

Children had the opportunity to take the lead and exercise choice in relation to their engagement in activities. Children were observed choosing activities such as playing with the doll house, puzzles and toy vehicles on the floor. Staff sat at tables engaging with the children partaking in tabletop activities and encouraging children to talk about what they were creating.

Children availed of outdoor play during the morning. The outdoor space had a shock resistant surface and was fully enclosed with a high-fence and gate. A roof provided cover during inclement weather. Equipment included goals and climbing frames with a slide.

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 was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised. Access to the preschool was gained through the gate which had an electromagnetic lock and was monitored and managed by the staff within. The partial glass entrance door to the service provided visibility to the staff in the office to any visitors or parents.

Cleaning products were stored safely in the kitchen out of reach of children.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were developmentally appropriate and in good condition.

Infection Control:

Warm water and liquid hand soap were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and after using the bathroom. Pedal bins were available in each care room and sanitary accommodation for the disposal of waste.

The care rooms and sanitary accommodation were well-ventilated with openable windows. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

The registered provider informed the inspector that no child attending the service was on specific medication. Staff were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in the kitchen out of reach of children. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

All fire exits were clear of obstruction. The fire assembly point was located in the car park at the front of the premises.

Outing:

A policy was in place to support outings conducted by the service. During discussion with staff, they advised that the children participate in walks in the local area. A risk assessment, check list and parental consent forms were completed prior to outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Popcorn and full grapes were observed in lunches provided by parents for two children in the Red room. These items present a potential choking hazard.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

All staff have been reminded of items that present a potential choking hazard that may be present in lunch boxes. A message was sent to parents immediately reminding them of foods that present a choking hazard. The services Healthy Eating policy has been updated and a copy has been sent to all parents. Staff check lunch boxes on arrival and remove prohibited items or make the necessary modifications to make food safe to eat.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of Healthy Eating Policy received.

Copy of message sent to parents viewed by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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)
Three staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR). All three FAR qualified staff members were available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.
- (2)(a)(b)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located in the preschool rooms on shelves and in the kitchen of the service. 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 was available of monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was recorded on 22 January 2026.

(b)

Records were kept of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment which was last serviced in June 2025. The smoke alarm system in the premises was last serviced on 27 January 2026.

(4)

A notice of 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

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 65 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.