

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH008		
Name of Service:	Athboy Community Childcare CLG		
Address of Service:	Townspark, Athboy, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	C15 K658		
Name of Registered Provider:	Pearse Ferguson		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time		
Date of Inspection:	03/07/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM 34
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham		
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

Athboy Community Childcare is located in a town in rural county Meath and provides a full day care /part time service to children from 0 to 6 years. The service is open Monday to Friday from 07.30 to 18.30. Eligible children avail of the state funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 3 hours per day over 38 weeks of the year within part- or fulltime attendance. The service operates in a 2-storey purpose-built building containing five rooms on the ground floor, catering for pre-school children, namely the Baby Room, the Small Toddler Room (morning), the Big Toddler Room (full day care), and the Pre-School Room, the 2pm room(operates as a school aged room and operates as a parttime ECCE room term time was not in use on the day of inspection). Two school aged room are also available upstairs with a kitchen, sanitary facilities (nappy changing area), two cot rooms available downstairs. Additionally, the outdoor play area is located to the back of the pre-school with adequate parking available to the front of the pre-school.

Staffing

Twenty-four staff are employed in the service which includes a manager, assistant manager, two supervisors, a kitchen assistant, and chef. On the day of the inspection the manager, supervisor and 16 childcare staff and a staff member assigned to preparing meals were present and a kitchen assistant.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9, 11, 19,20, 21,22,23,24,25,26 and 28. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby room, Small Toddlers room and the Big Toddlers room. This inspection did not include Preschool room and the Afterschool room.

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 manager, supervisor, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(c) A clear management structure that identified specific roles of each employee was displayed in the reception area.

(2) (a)&(b) Twenty-four staff files were reviewed.

Forty-eight validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for all adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 1 staff member. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for 6 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Twenty two childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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) On the day of inspection there were 16 adults working directly with 43 pre-school children attending the service.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity on the day of inspection:

The **Baby room**: 7 pre-school children aged between 1 year and 2 years being cared for by 2 adults. Two children were attending parttime care and 5 children were attending on a full day care basis.

The **Small Toddlers room**: 3 children ranging in age from 1 year 11 months to 2 years 1 month cared for by 1 adult. One child attending the service on a full day care basis and 2 children attending the service on a part-time

basis. The child attending full day care moved to the Big Toddler room for the afternoon as this room closes at 13.30pm.

The **Big Toddlers room**: 7 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years, 7 attending the service on a full day care basis and 1 child attending on a part-time basis being cared for by 3 adults.

The **Preschool room**: 18 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years, 13 children attending the service on a full day care basis and 5 preschool children attending on a parttime care basis being cared for by 3 adults.

The **2pm room**: not in use on the day of inspection.

The **Afterschool room A & B**: 8 preschool children ranging in 4 years 6 months to 5 years, 7 children attending on a full day care basis and 1 child attending parttime care. Twelve school aged children were also present all being cared for by 3 adults.

(8) (a) According to the staff roster, the manager ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times

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) The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials, and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the children.

Three care rooms were inspected namely the Baby room, the Small Toddlers room and the Big Toddlers room.

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a kind and caring manner and positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions. The adults conversed with the children in a sensitive and respectful manner, used soft tones of voice, engaged with the children at their level and responded promptly to their cues for assistance and comfort. The children were encouraged to be independent in play and learning, whilst caring for their belongings and using the toilet. Staff supervised and treated the children in a sensitive manner during nappy changes and toileting. Nappies were changed frequently and on an individual need's basis. The children were encouraged and supported to

manage their own personal care and nasal care appropriate to their age and level of development. The infants sleep was attended to on an individual basis and an alternative area and activities were offered for children who did not wish to sleep. The infants were encouraged to feed themselves and promoted to be independent. Appropriate crockery and feeding utensils were provided in each room and these periods were observed to be relaxed and unhurried. The adults offered praise and encouragement, and children were respected and supported in their choice of individual and group engagement in activities. The children in each room were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and learning activities and the children were observed to be fully engaged and included in all activities in the indoor and outdoor environments. The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor area for play based activities.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

A key person approach was observed in each care room, the staff demonstrated an appropriate level of knowledge of the children's preferences, interests, and individual capabilities. The adults followed the children's lead in the care rooms and the children were supported in individual and group play. The rooms accommodated visual routine displays demonstrating photographic illustrations to support and include all children in the programme of care. The children were notified and consulted in advance of changes in the activities. The transitions in the programme of care were completed cohesively in a calm manner in the care rooms. The children's care need observations were shared daily with parent/guardians routine sheets. The adults in each room worked effectively together to facilitate the programme of care and education. The adults communicated informally with parents/guardians on messaging system and during collection periods.

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-

(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, o

Compliance Information

(1)(b) The sleep room adjoining the Baby room had 6 standard cots and the Big Toddler room had 7 cots for the younger children requiring sleep. The had stackable beds placed on the floor for the older children requiring sleep. Within the care rooms there were mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.

(3)(a) Three outdoor space was located to the rear of the building, which was enclosed by walls, had an all-weather surface with 2 secure side gates. A poly tunnel was also available for the children to plant and play in.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The care rooms had a range of play materials and equipment that offered stimulation, exploration and imagination. These were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choices, encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play and movement.
- Equipment in the outdoor spaces included a wigwam, ball and nets, planting boxes, sensory board, sand tray, house, and climbing frame. A storage area was also available with additional play equipment such as ride on toys and building blocks.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had an 8-week menu plan for the children attending the full day care service with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, fish and poultry cooked on site. Some brought their own lunch. On the day of inspection, the children had a choice of cereals for breakfast between 8.15am to 9.45am. Morning snack was served at 10:30am which consisted of fruit. The main meal of the day was served at 12 midday and consisted of fish fingers, mash, peas and broccoli. Evening tea was served at 15.00pm which consisted of grilled cheese on toast. Additional snacks were available for the children staying until 6pm if required. Water was the drinks of choice with individual cups and water jugs available in the care rooms.

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

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- All bins for contaminated waste were foot pedal operated.
- Warm water, hand paper towel and liquid soap was available in the children's sanitary facilities.

Safe Sleep:

The following safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Children who were in cots and on sleep beds were supervised by an adequate number of adults at all times.

- A sleep log was maintained on all sleeping children at 10 minutes interval recording their colour, breathing pattern and position.
- The temperature of the sleep room was maintained between the normal range of 16°C to 20°C and the temperature of the care rooms used for sleep were maintained between the normal range of 18°C to 22°C while children were sleeping.

Fire Safety:

The following Fire Safety practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- All emergency exit doors were accessible in the event of an evacuation needed except for the sleep room see non-compliance below.
- Staff members had up to date Fire Safety Training.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

- Garda vetting was available for 1 staff member. However, the 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'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Garda vetting was applied for prior to its expiry; however, the process took longer than expected. The manager will now apply for Garda vetting two months prior to expiry.

Supporting documentation submitted

The staff members garda vetting was submitted to the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) 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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) 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.

Compliance Information

(1) A record was kept of each child's time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

(3) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance, the inspector was requested to record their arrival and departure times.

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) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 18th June 2025.
- (b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment which were last serviced on the 21st February 2025 and 10th May 2025 respectively.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 75 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2025 to the 27th March 2026.