

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015MN010 | | |
| Name of Service: | Carrickmacross Childcare Ltd | | |
| Address of Service: | Carrickmacross Workhouse, Shercock Road, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan | | |
| Eircode: | A81 E372 | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Vera Keyes | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 13/05/2025 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 43 | PM 29 |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84 | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | S Mc Kenna M Mc Donnell | | |
| Title: | Early Years Inspectors | | |
| 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

Carrickmacross Childcare Ltd is a private owned service. The service currently provides care for children aged 3 to 6 years, providing full day care, part time and sessional care types. The service operates 7am to 6.30pm daily and caters for a maximum of 85 children. The service operates from a 2-storey community building on the outskirts of Carrickmacross town Co Monaghan. There are 4 care rooms, 2 nappy changing areas, a sleep room, children's sanitary accommodation, a kitchen and an office. There are 2 outdoor areas to the back and side of the building. Car parking is available to the front and side of the building.

Staffing

There are 14 staff employed in the service, 13 staff work directly with the children, which includes the service manager and the registered provider. One staff member is employed as the cook.

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 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding

Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures and 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 inspectors wish 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

(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 in charge to deputise in their absence.
 (b) Following discussion with the registered provider and person in charge, along with review of the staff roster, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4)

Following a discussion with the registered provider and service manager and a review of the staff roster, it was confirmed that no new members of staff have been employed in the service since the last inspection on 29/11/2024. Following the last inspection the requirements in relation to references, police vetting and qualifications had been met. The registered provider 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. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:

Three adults cared for 13 children aged 3 years 5 months to 5 years 6 months in the Junior Preschool Room.

Two adults cared for 5 children aged 3 years 5 months to 5 years in the Senior Preschool Room.

Two adults cared for 14 children aged 3 years 5 months to 5 years 4 months in Naíonra Rois.

Two adults cared for 11 children aged 3 years 6 months to 5 years in Seomra Caoimhín.

In addition to the above, the manager and registered provider were office based, and assisted in care rooms as required.

(8) A review of the staff rosters, demonstrated that there are at least 2 adults on the premises while the full day care service is in operation.

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

(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

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

A two-week menu is in place within the service. The snacks and hot meals are prepared daily by the cook. The morning snack on the day of inspection was cheese or ham sandwiches with bananas. The main meal was fish fingers, beans and potatoes, with an afternoon snack of pancakes and fruit scheduled for 3.30pm. Meal times were observed to be unrushed, and children were supported where extra help was required. The staff were observed to sit with the children at meal times and engage in conversations. Extra portions were available where requested.

Younger children's nappies were changed in line with their daily routine, and older children were observed to use the toilet independently. The staff in the Senior Preschool, Naíonra Rois and Seomra Caoimhín went with the children when they needed to use the sanitary facilities due to the location across the hallway in the community building. The children used the toilet or had their nappy changed individually, which provided privacy to each child.

The children's clothes were observed to be changed promptly where toileting incidents occurred.

Care was given to the children appearances, through cleaning of children's runny noses, and they were also dressed appropriately for the weather on the day of inspection. Suncream was applied before children went outside in the sunny weather.

Staff advised the inspectors that no children sleep whilst currently attending the service. In each of the care rooms, cosy areas were provided to include mats and cushion where children could take time out to rest when needed.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere in all of the care rooms was warm and welcoming. The children were observed to be consistently engaged in activities.

A key worker system was in place in all of the care rooms, which encourages close relationships to be formed between children and staff. There was minimal staff change over observed, and the children displayed familiarity with the staff who cared for them within their care rooms, including the manager and registered provider. The staff acted as positive role models for the children, encouraging and promoting positive behaviour, and also giving praise to children when they achieved a task.

The staff were observed to use age-appropriate strategies to help children find positive solutions to problems such as taking turns and sharing of toys.

The staff were observed to demonstrate sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families, through respecting parental wishes while also acknowledging and catering for the children's individual preferences and choice in food options or play opportunities.

Communication with parents is through the use of a digital app and also in person at arrival and collection times. Daily records provided to parents include the children's eating and toileting routines, as well as comments or reminders for materials needed such as nappies or spare clothing.

Strong team work is evident within the service, the staff and management appeared to work well together, keeping each other informed of any changes. The staff team advised the inspectors that they have regular staff meetings and also have support from the management team when required.

Physical And Material Environment

The care rooms were laid out with similar interest areas to include cosy areas with books, well-resourced home corners with play equipment. Jigsaws along with table top toys, sensory areas to include painting and playdough, small world toys and houses, and floor play where push along toys were observed in use. Dolls and doll equipment, construction areas and dress up materials were also available.

Children's creative work, a family tree display, family photos and birthday charts were on display in each of the care rooms. The indoor environments were laid out to accommodate a variety of play and interest areas for the children in attendance.

Materials were freely available and accessible to children on low level shelves and labelled boxes at children's level, which nurtures the children's independence to retrieve and return play materials.

The two outdoor areas were spacious, pleasant and safe, and laid out well to accommodate the needs of the children in attendance. The ground surface in both outdoor play areas included soft impact surfacing. Developmentally appropriate materials and equipment was available to include ride on toys, bikes, trikes and scooters. The children also had access to playhouses and play equipment such as steps and balance beams. In the second outdoor area there was a walled garden area. This area contained raised beds with trees and plants. There was a covered area with a mud kitchen and supporting equipment, such as pots and pans available. A sandpit with cover was also available with spades, trucks and buckets. This variety of areas and equipment provided opportunities for challenge and safe risks which were useable all year round. Benches and seating in both outdoor areas provided opportunities for rest for the children.

The management team and the staff in the Junior Preschool room advised the inspectors that they had recently received support from a quality development service. The staff advised that this process has had a really positive impact on the atmosphere, daily routine and the children's play and learning experiences within the care room. The quality lead support who is the room leader advised that they now operate a free-flowing system between the indoor and outdoor areas, as the outdoor area is located directly off the care room. This in turn removed the waiting times for the children during transitions which was a non-compliance in the last inspection. The staff discussed providing many daily sensory activities, which they are also working on increasing to include a sand area in the outdoors; thereby allowing the children to choose to partake or opt out in planned activities, stating that additional play materials will be available for their use at these times. The changes discussed and implemented by the staff in this room, all of which were observed in place on the day of inspection has in turn had a positive impact on the children's play and learning experiences during their time in the service.

The children's play choices in Junior Preschool room were respected for example the children wanted to add paint to the playdough and this was provided for, and they were facilitated to take toys from indoors to the outdoor area.

The children in the Senior Preschool were observed to enjoy outdoor play time. During circle time the children listened to stories, telling the staff member what their favourite stories were. Links to home life were discussed where children had stairs in their own houses. The children were observed to have fun playing with dolls who were "learning how to walk" and enjoyed building blocks and using stickers. The staff member was observed to sit with the children during their play and provided extra materials to build upon the children's learning experiences.

The children in Naíonra Rois were participating in free choice activities on the inspector's arrival into the room. Some of the children were playing with sensory materials and small toys whilst others were drawing and colouring. Staff members were observed to sit with and participated in these activities with the children. Other children were also reading books and playing in the home corner. The children and staff members spoke of the Irish language that they were learning which was complimented by the display in the room.

The children in Seomra Caoimhín took part in circle time upon the inspector's arrival. Following circle time, the children had their snack, and children were asked what they would like from the choice of sandwiches and fruit. Staff members interacted kindly with the children whilst putting on the children's own suncream. The children and staff spoke about the upcoming graduation and the preparation the children were doing including learning songs in Irish. The children from both rooms were observed using the outdoor play area and enjoyed using the steps, sand pit and bikes.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The main entrance doors to the premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The designated outdoor play spaces were secured by fencing and lockable gates and were observed to be free from hazards.
- The children were observed to be adequately supervised in their care rooms, during transitions to the outdoors and in the Junior Preschool room where a free flow play system from indoor to outdoors was in operation.
- The toys and equipment in use by the children was observed to be in good condition.
- Risk assessments were available for review within each care room and were completed up to date.
- The kitchen is located away from the care rooms and remained inaccessible to the children.
- Handrails on the stairways were suitable for the children's use and maintained in good repair.
- Floor coverings were presented in good condition throughout the service.

- Storage areas were inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored on high level shelving out of the reach of the children.
- Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, bins and single use paper towels were provided at each wash hand basin.
- The children were observed to wash their hands before snack and meals times and after using the toilet or having their nappy changed.
- Waste bins were stored in an area inaccessible to the children.
- Sanitary areas were well ventilated through the use of open windows and or mechanical ventilation units.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review in each of the care rooms and were completed up to date.
- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic manner throughout.
- A mouthed toy box was in use with the mouthed toys cleaned daily in line with the services policy.

Safe Sleep:

- The sleep room was set up with 4 stackable beds and bedding. One cot and additional stackable beds with bedding was also available if required. The manager and staff confirmed that no children sleep at present.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 14 staff members. However, one of 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'. This non-compliance remained outstanding from the services most recent inspection on 29/11/2024, where the registered provider stated that "Garda vetting applications have been made, and Staff Garda vetting and dates were on display in office to help keep track of renewals. Management is aware of new Garda vetting rules."

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Garda Vetting application and contact with the liaison company to track the process. Better control over staff files.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of Garda vetting record.

Summary Comment

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

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 registered provider ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. The manager held in-date FAR training certificates. Additional staff members are due to attend FAR training in the coming months.

(2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and were stored in each of the care rooms in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

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 record of fire drills that take place was available, with the most recent dated fire drill recorded on 15/04/2025.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers were dated February 2025, and smoke alarms were dated April 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on the walls throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for up to 100 pre-school children attending the service on a Full Care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28/03/2025 to 27/03/2026.