

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MN024
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Name of Service:	Farney Community Crèche
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Address of Service:	98 Alderwood Heights, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan
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Eircode:	A81 AE24
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Name of Registered Provider:	Christina Duffy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	24
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Mc Kenna
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

Farney Community Crèche is a community based Early Years' service, located within a housing estate in Carrickmacross in Co Monaghan. The service operates from 7am to 6pm each weekday and provides sessional, part-time and full day care to pre-school children aged from 1 to 6 years. A school aged service is also provided. The service is conducted from a purpose built premises and consists of four care rooms and a school aged room. Three of the four care rooms inspected named Caterpillar, Butterfly and Little Owls had preschool children in attendance, the Bizzy Bees room was used by school aged children and was not inspected. Designated outdoor play areas were available. Parking is provided at the front of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 21 staff members. Three staff are auxiliary and work as cook, caretaker and admin support. Eighteen staff are employed to work directly with children, of which three staff as supernumerary, and two who are part of a community employment scheme. The registered provider is not service based.

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 regulations 9, 11, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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
- (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) (b) The service had a designated person in charge, and a named person in charge in their absence.

Following discussion with the person in charge, and a review of the staff roster it was confirmed that at all times when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) A clear management structure, which identified staff roles was in place.

(2) The staff files for 21 adults were reviewed as follows;

(a) (b) Two written and validated references from past employers, and or reputable sources in the absence of past employment were on file for the 21 adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 21 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 21 adults, demonstrated that 9 adults had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the 9 adults was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 15 adults employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. The remaining adults did not require a qualification.

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 inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. When the service was operating at full capacity on the day, the following adult to child ratios were observed:

Morning:

Two adults cared for 6 children aged 1 years 2 months to 1 year 13 months in the Caterpillar Room.

Two adults cared for 10 children aged 2 years to 2 years 9 months in the Butterfly Room.

Three adults cared for 22 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 3 months in the Little Owls Room.

Afternoon:

Two adults cared for 2 children aged 1 years 2 months to 1 year 13 months in the Caterpillar Room.

Two adults cared for 7 children aged 2 years to 2 years 9 months in the Butterfly Room.

Three adults cared for 15 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 3 months in the Little Owls Room.

A school age room was in operation with one adult caring for 8 school aged children.

In addition to the above, the following staff were present on site as follows:

The person in charge was office based but assisted in rooms when required.

Three adults employed in a supernumerary capacity, worked throughout the three care rooms that had preschool children present.

An additional two staff covered staff lunches.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters.

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

- The children were observed to be independent in the older care room while using the toilet. The adults remained close by to provide supports if needed. Younger children using the toilet were supported by staff when required. Nappy changing occurs at scheduled times in line with the daily routine, with staff advising the inspector children are changed outside these times where they may have soiled their nappies and in line with sleep time and home times.
- Areas of rest were provided in each care room, soft seating, cushions and mats provided a place for children to relax and have some quiet time.
- The atmosphere throughout the service was warm and welcoming. The rooms were bright and colourful and well ventilated.
- The children in the Butterfly room and Little Owls room took part in outdoor play time and were appropriately dressed for the weather.
- Sets of spare clothing for the children was available. Aprons for water play time were observed in use.

Supporting Relationships

- The children were observed to engage well with their peers. Where small disagreements over toys arose, the adults were observed to respond with a calm and appropriate manner to the age of the children involved.
- The children were observed to be familiar with all the adults. When adults came into the room to cover breaks or provided extra supports, the children were observed to go over to the adults smiling and give them hugs. At nappy changing times the adults were observed to engage in conversation with the children, who were observed to talk and laugh with the adults.
- The children in the care rooms demonstrated familiarity with routine. The children in the Little Owls room engaged in many play opportunities at a time of their choosing and were familiar with the choice of going outside throughout the day. Two of the older children in the Caterpillar room demonstrated familiarity with their routine, when they overhead the adult tell the inspector what happens next they were observed to go and sit on the soft seating area awaiting song time before their snack. The children were observed smiling and getting excited for what comes next in their daily routine.

- The staff team were observed to work well together. It was observed on the day that the staff are familiar with all care rooms, and the children in attendance. The person in charge is super numeracy and was observed to support the care rooms throughout the day of inspection. The person in charge explained that they cover in rooms where required.
- Communication with parents is via a software application, email and in person at arrival and collection times. The parents drop off and collect their children at the care rooms and are also facilitated to enter the care rooms, which was observed in practise on the day of inspection. Staff were observed to speak to parents on the day of inspection at drop off and collection times, with handover periods at a pace that suited the parents and children.

Physical and Material Environment

- The care rooms in use by preschool children were observed to be highly resourced. Each care room was similar to one another and provided for all varieties of play, to both babies and preschool children. Interest areas were clearly defined and labelled.
- The Caterpillar room was laid out with designated areas. The room was sectioned into two to allow for safe floor play time for younger babies if needed, otherwise the room would have free flow access to all children. The areas available included sand play, kitchen play, dolls and prams, jigsaws, book and seating area, pull-a-long toys, musical toys, creative materials, a ball pit and floor play areas with musical and small world toys. All materials were age and stage appropriate for the children, with children observed to choose what areas to play in throughout the day. The children were observed to enjoy playing with the sand, dolls prams and singing, with younger babies enjoying floor play, close one to one support with adults, and musical toys.
- The Butterfly room provided defined areas of play which included table top toys, home corner area, jigsaws, art materials, playdough, dress up, a Halloween interest table, sand tray, cars and a mat. Playdough and table top toys proved popular in the Butterfly room, with children also observed to take part in role play. The children were observed engaged in conversations with the adults throughout their play. Praise and encouragement were observed, with children responding with smiles and putting their thumbs up.
- The Little Owls room contained construction area, book and reading area, a well-resourced creative section. A home corner, tool bench, small world areas, dress up, water play, and table top toys was also provided. Playdough was observed being made with a choice of blue colouring added following a child's choice of colour. Colouring and sticking ghost activities was observed to be popular.

Water play was availed of throughout the session. One adult and some children took part in outdoor play intermittently throughout the day. The staff and the person in charge advised having outdoor play as a choice at all times allows for opportunities for working in small groups and assists children's concentration levels throughout the day.

- There were numerous creative displays throughout the service. Recent creative work consisting of autumn and witch collages were displayed. Pumpkin and spider prints were also displayed. Family walls and birthday charts were on display in each of the care rooms. Posters reflecting different cultures and families and photos of the child's local community were on display.

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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) There was adequate and suitable facilities for a preschool child to rest during the day. All sleeping children were placed into cots within a designated sleep room. The children from the Caterpillar and Butterfly Rooms shared the one sleep room. Nine cots with the required safety mattresses were available. Each child had their own bedding laundered on a weekly basis or more often if required. The room temperature during sleep time was maintained at the recommended sleep room temperature of 16 - 20 °C.
- (b) In each of the care rooms there was a soft area containing a variety of soft sofa/ cushions and mats if a child required a rest during their day. Two new floor beds had been recently purchased and were available for use if additional children required a sleep.

(3) (a) There was outdoor areas located directly of the Caterpillar, Butterfly and Little Owls play rooms. The Bizzy Bees room have access to an outdoor play area to the rear of the little owl's outdoor area. The person in charged advised that on occasions the care rooms do share the outdoor areas for a change of environment. The registered provider also advised that the children attending the care rooms use outdoor play consistently throughout the day, which was observed in the Butterfly and Little Owl rooms on the day of inspection. The outdoor areas are surrounded with fencing and gates. The ground surfacing was soft play surfaces with some concrete areas. Outdoor play equipment was available in each outdoor area suitable for the age and stage of the children attending the care rooms. Items in the Caterpillar area included a chalkboard, a small slide, push-a-long toys, trucks, blocks, a see saw and a small climbing frame. The Butterfly room had ride on trucks, a mud kitchen, blocks, benches and a climbing frame. The Little Owls had a covered area, sand tray, water bench, planting areas, a play kitchen with materials, chalkboard and a slide. The area allocated for the Bizzy bees had tennis rackets, spades, a basketball hoop, seating and balls. The person in charge advised the staff take additional resources to the outdoor play areas on a daily basis.

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 provides a hot meal daily to children in attendance on a part time or full day care basis. A menu was available and on display which detailed the hot meal served to the children which is cooked by the cook. The hot meals listed on the menu, while taking into consideration the age of children provided for was suitable, nutritious and had a varied choice for the children. Meals were adjusted to suit younger children and babies needs where required.
- Breakfast cereal is available to children if required. The children bring in their own food items from home which is stored in the fridge in each care room. A morning snack is served at 10am, dinner which is the hot meal cooked on site at 12.15pm , evening snack at 3pm with a further snack provided where children's routine required, or children appear hungry. The items in children's lunch boxes on the day of inspection included a variety of cereal, yogurts, waffles, beans, sandwiches, crackers, cheeses, meat and a selection of fruit. The children were observed to have their morning snack in the care rooms at 10am and dinner at 12.15pm on the day of the inspection.

- The children’s drink bottles were available and accessible in the care rooms throughout the day. The utensils used at meal times were appropriate to the children age and stage of development. The younger babies and children were observed to wear bibs at meal times.
- Where children have specific dietary requirements the person in charge and the staff in the relevant care rooms explained how they cater for and provide for any request from parents regarding dietary requirements.
- The children were observed to be independent at morning snack time, with the adults supporting and encouraging children where needed. The adults were observed to sit with the children at snack time in the Butterfly room using these opportunities to engage in child led conversations.
- The person in charge and staff advised the inspector that if the quantity of food was not adequate, taking into consideration the child’s time spent in the service, additional food items can be provided to the children.

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 main entrance to the building was secure upon the inspectors arrival and remained secure throughout the inspection process. The inspector was requested to sign a visitors log upon arrival.
- The materials and resources available both indoor and outdoor appeared to be maintained in good repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children.
- Storage areas were secured to prevent access by children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm running water, paper towels, hand soap and foot operated pedal bins were provided within each sanitary area. Pedal operated nappy bins were available in each nappy area.
- Hand washing practises were observed in practise throughout the care rooms. Handwashing was observed after toilet and nappy changing times, and prior to snack and meal times.
- Tables were cleaned before and after snack and meal times.

- All food items were stored in fridges in each care room until required.
- Cleaning schedules were in place and up to date. The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic manner.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. In the Caterpillar and Butterfly nappy changing areas, a microfibre cloth was observed to be used to wipe down the nappy changing mat after each use. The staff advised it is changed after each set of nappy changing times. This is a risk of cross contamination and infection.

Safe Sleep:

2. In the Butterfly room a sleep log was maintained digitally. The staff advised the inspector that each child is checked every 10 minutes stating they check the sleeping child's colour, breathing and position along with the room temperature. The digital records available on the day of inspection did not demonstrate a consistent 10-minute check on each sleeping child. This practise is not in line with the services safe sleep policy.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. Disposable cloths are now used in the changing area. Staff have been advised to use only disposable cloths for washing down the changing mat. A new disposable cloth must be used for each new nappy change.

Safe Sleep:

2. Staff ensure that after each sleep check they document all details immediately on the app. The room leader ensures this occurs and the manager checks this is being carried out correctly. The staff have been shown again how to correctly document sleep check times on the app, should this become an issue in the future we will revert back to paper documentation of sleep checks which will ensure all information is documented in accurately.

Supporting documentation submitted

Updated nappy changing policy and procedure to include use of disposable cloths. Signed staff training records.

Print out of digital sleep records, documenting 10-minute interval checks.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times. Five adults present on the day of inspection held in date FAR training.
- (2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available in each of the care rooms. They were stored within designated cupboards.

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 on 30 September 2024.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated April 2024, and the smoke alarms was dated 22 October 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on the walls in the care rooms and 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 80 pre-school children attending the service on a full-time basis. The policy showed that the service was insured until 27 March 2025.