

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015MO006

Name of Service: Ardnaree Community Playgroup Ltd.

Address of Service: Shanaghy, Ballina, Co. Mayo

Eircode: F26 NX85

Name of Registered Provider: Fiona McLoughlin

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 22/09/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell
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

Ardnaree Community Playgroup Ltd. is a community service in Ballina, Co Mayo. The service is registered to provide sessional services for children aged from two and six years of age. The service provides a morning session between 09:15-12:15 hours and an afternoon session from 13:15-16:15 hours for 38 weeks of the year. The premises is in a single storey dwelling house that has been converted for the provision of childcare services. There is one large playroom, a kitchen and sanitary accommodation in the building. Children have access to a large outdoor play area with a sheltered decking space to the rear of the building.

Staffing

There are five staff who work directly with the children in the service including staff employed through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Scheme. An additional staff member is employed in the service through an employment scheme. The registered provider does not work directly in the service.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 27 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 deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises.

(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 in the service and a named person to deputise in her absence.
- (b) The deputy designated person in charge was present in the service throughout the inspection. Records showed that either the designated person in charge or deputy was always present when children were in attendance in the service.
- (2) Discussion with the deputy designated person in charge and review of records found that there were six adults working in the service at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documentation was available for the staff:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for one staff member. One written validated reference from past employers for four staff.
 - (b) Two written validated references from sources other than a past employer for one adult. One written validated reference from another source for four adults.

- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
- (d) International police vetting documents were not required for the six staff.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for four staff members who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) The evidence available on file was insufficient to show that the qualifications for one staff met the regulatory requirements.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

- (4)
Corrective and Preventive Action
The staff member obtained confirmation of successful completion of a relevant qualification and provided same to the service. A checklist has been introduced in the service to ensure that all new staff provide verified documentation including qualifications before commencing work.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of confirmation of qualification.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted to the Inspectorate by the service has been reviewed and deemed to have addressed the regulatory non-compliance found on inspection.

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) Throughout the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service. On the inspector's announced arrival to the service there were 4 adults working directly with 16 children.
- (3) The minimum ratio for sessional services providing care to children over 2 ½ years of 1 adult to each 11 children was adhered to with 4 adults working directly with 16 children during the inspection.

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

The service had a daily routine in place that was flexible and responsive to children's needs. The inspection took place early in the new preschool year and children were settling into the service with the daily routine adapted to assist with this process. Short term planning goals on display in the playroom included focusing on supporting children through the settling in process, to help children new to the service to adjust to the new environment. The goals also included supporting children who had previously attended to reintegrate back into the service following the summer holidays.

The staff informed the inspector that a large amount of time was spent by the children in the well-developed outdoor areas which was evident on the day of the inspection. There was a large decking area with a shelter

beside the playroom. This area had been created into an outdoor playroom with defined interest areas that was used during the session for greeting time and other play activities. The decking area connected with the extensive outdoor garden that had planting areas, grass areas and impact absorbent ground cover where children were observed to run freely and spend time playing on the large climbing system.

The outdoor and indoor play areas were very well resourced with a variety of toys and play equipment that were accessible to the children and were arranged in interest areas that were clearly labelled and signposted. These include home corners, transport toys, construction toys, books, tabletop activities and dolls areas. The large playroom had a sensory area with soft coloured padding that children were free to wander into and use if they wanted to relax. When one child moved into the sensory area, a staff member was observed to immediately turn on a projector that projected pictures of fish on the wall and to turn on a large cylindrical bubble light that contained fish. The child then started to laugh and point excitedly at the fish with the staff member.

The staff used positive methods to promote positive behaviour with the children. The children were alerted to upcoming transitions between activities and given time to prepare for example transition from outdoor play to greeting time on the wooden deck beside the playroom door. The staff explained to the inspector that a “five minute system” using small signs with symbols such as hands is used with a child informing the other children that a change in activity will take place in five minutes. There were coloured sand timers available to visually represent time for children and used for example to help with the concept of sharing.

The staff were observed to be warm and friendly in their approaches to the children and each other. At greeting time, all children were included in the greeting song using each child’s name. At collection time, the children’s parents and caregivers were met at the gates at the rear of the building with exchanges of information observed. The staff showed the inspector examples of the individual dairies kept for the children that contained photographs and descriptions of observations made of the children relating to their progress in the service.

Parents were shown these dairies at intervals during the preschool year and given opportunities to sign and comment on them and bring them home to explore and discuss them with their child. Individual care-plans were developed where needed for children in consultation with their parents and support staff.

The service provided the food for the children snacks which they ate sitting in groups at tables with the staff. The children were encouraged to serve themselves food allowing them to judge how much food they would like to eat.

Children were observed to go to the sanitary units to use the toilet when they felt they needed to with supports given to children by staff when needed. Nappy changing facilities were available and used to meet children’s care needs where needed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The staff were observed to supervise the children appropriately during the inspection. There was a system in place where children could choose to play inside or outdoors at certain times with free movement between the areas.

The staff were observed to link in with each other frequently and when needed to check and confirm the whereabouts of children and identify the staff who were responsible for supervising each child. Children who were toilet-trained were encouraged to use the toilet by themselves out of view of the staff but within earshot if help was needed from staff. The staff supervised the children closely when playing outdoors and positioned themselves to be able to view the children for example next to the wooden climbing system that children played on. The staff sat with the children at tables to observe and supervise them when eating.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was on display for a maximum of 22 children attending sessional services at any one time with an expiry date of the 27 March 2026.