

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MO029
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Care & Education Academy
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Castlebar Retail Park, Knockrawer, Breaffy Road, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F23 CD70
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	John McGowan
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	22/05/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	72	PM	62
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	B Lavin & F Duffy
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector & Inspection and Registration Manager

### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable
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### Description of service

Care & Education Academy is a privately owned and operated service located in a retail business park on the outskirts of Castlebar in county Mayo. The service provides full day, part-time and sessional preschool care to children aged 0-6 years and operates from 8.15am to 6.00pm. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The service operates from a single-story purpose-built building which has five care rooms. A kitchen, dining room, two sleep areas, an office and sanitary accommodation are also on site. Children have access to two designated outdoor areas which are located along one side of the building which can be directly accessed from some of the care rooms.

### Staffing

There were 23 staff members employed to work in the service at the time of inspection. This is not including the registered provider who is not on the premises on a daily basis. There is a named person in charge and a named person to deputise in the event of their absence. Of the 23 staff members, 21 were employed to work directly with the preschool children.

### 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.

An additional regulation was added on the day of inspection. Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, specifically in relation to safe sleep requirements.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the following rooms- Montessori Green, Montessori Blue, Wobblers and Toddlers.

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

(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 manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) During the period of inspection, the service manager was on the premises and facilitated the inspection.

Following a review of the service files and discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that there were 3 new members of staff employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 05/12/2024.

There were four Garda vetting disclosures updated since the last inspection, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.

The three staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

- (2)(a) There were five of the required six written and appropriately validated references available from their most recent employer for the adults working in the service.
- (b) There was one of the required six written and validated references from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for the staff working in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
- (d) A Police vetting disclosure was available for one adult working in the service as they had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over six months.
- (4) All adults working directly with children have obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or equivalent on the National Qualifications Framework.

## 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) During the period of the inspection the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2)
- In the Wobbler room there were 12 children present aged between 1-2 years and 3 staff members.
  - In the Toddler room there were 15 children present aged 2 – 3 years and 3 staff members.
  - In the Montessori blue room there were 17 children present aged 4-5 years and 2 staff members.
  - In the Montessori green room there were 18 children present aged 3-4 years and 4 staff members.

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- In the sessional room there were 10 children present aged 3-4 years and 2 staff members.

In addition, there were two staff members working across care rooms on the day of inspection, covering breaks and providing additional support to children.

(8)(a) Documentary evidence on a staff roster indicated that at least two adults were on the premises when the pre-school was operating.

### 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

##### Basic Needs:

- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The staff complied with the service's healthy eating policy.
- Nutritious meals and snacks were provided by the service and served at regular times.
- Each child had enough time to eat and enjoy their meals and snacks without being rushed.
- The tables and chairs and highchairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- The staff encouraged children to feed themselves independently, according to their age and stage of development.
- The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to nappy changing, toileting and toilet training. The staff responded to children's cues and toileting needs quickly and calmly. The privacy and dignity of a child having their nappy changed was maintained. The older children in the pre-school rooms had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilet.

- The staff provided for each child's comfort and need for rest and relaxation in each of the playrooms. The pre-school rooms had safe and comfortable spaces for babies and toddlers to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up and learn to walk.
- The children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Children were aware of routines, daily transitions were seamless and made as comfortable as possible; for example, going outside, getting ready for meals and sleep provision.
- The children were observed at free play, connecting, stacking, building, linking, doing puzzles and tabletop activities. The children played with transport vehicles, a toy kitchen, soft toys, farm toys, baby dolls, ride on bikes and played soccer.

### Supporting relationships:

The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by -

- having a key person system for each child,
- showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
- listening to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures and body language,
- using soft tones, the child's individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact,
- providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork and a sense of belonging,
- providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks,
- working with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- On speaking with the staff, the inspectors were informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the service including the child's likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in,
- The staff ensured that the children had ongoing opportunities to interact informally with one another: for example, at free play, parallel play, outdoor play and eating together.

## 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.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### Safe Sleep:

The temperature recorded by the service at 12.30pm in the Wobbler sleep room was 24°C with 12 children sleeping in the room. This posed a safety risk to the children. The recommended sleep temperature for children under the age of 2 years is 16-20°C.

#### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### Safe Sleep:

A digital thermometer is now in place in the sleep room to accurately record the room temperatures. The air conditioning unit within the sleep room will be used to cool the room and this will remain on during the children's nap time. A permanent air conditioning system in use in other care rooms in the service will be added to the sleep room.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

##### Safe Sleep:

A copy of the sleep records for the Wobbler room were submitted to the Inspectorate showing sleep room temperatures within the recommended 16-20°C.

#### Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider have adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection.

## 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 trained in first aid was immediately available to the preschool children attending the service.

There were four adults employed in the service trained in First Aid Response with expiry dates of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2027, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2026, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and 12<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box in each playroom and one located in the office. The first aid boxes were safely stored in a conspicuous position in each playroom and in the office. The first aid boxes had adequate supplies for the number of children attending.

(b) The first aid boxes were available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

## 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.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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 in writing was kept and maintained in the service of the monthly fire drills. The last monthly fire drill was dated 11/3/2025.

(b)

A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment with the last annual service dated 5/03/2025.

The annual maintenance for the services smoke and fire detection system was dated 17/02/2025.

(3)

The relevant records were retained for the required five-year time period.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the pre-school rooms.

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### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 31/08/2025, was for a full day care service, for a maximum number of 106 children. The insurance covered the following,

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- buildings,
- outings undertaken as part of the service provision.