

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MO030
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Carracastle Community Childcare Service
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Castleduff, Carracastle, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Mayo
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F45 Y205
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Karen Kilcullen
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	23/02/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	34	PM	21
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M Farrell
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

Carracastle Community Childcare Service is a community operated, full day care service located beside a primary school in Carracastle, Co. Mayo. The service is registered to provide childcare services to children aged between two and six years of age. The service opening hours are from 8:00 and 18:00 hours, including sessional services from 09:15 to 12:15 hours. The premises is a purpose-built detached, single storey building with two playrooms, sanitary facilities, a kitchen and an office. Large well-developed, enclosed outdoor play areas are provided to the rear and sides of the premises. The service is registered to provide school aged services.

### Staffing

There were 18 staff including childcare staff, a manager, office administrator and a cook in the service and 2 adult students on educational placement at the time of the inspection. Two of the staff were employed through the Access and Inclusion Model Scheme.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23 and 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. 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*

*(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 designated person in charge was present throughout the inspection.

(2)  
Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that 10 new adults were working in the service since the previous inspection.

(a) Two written validated references from previous employers in particular their most recent employer were available for six adults. One written validated reference from a past employer was available for two adults.

(b) Two written references from sources other than past employers were available for one adult.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 20 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. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) International police vetting was available on file for one adult new to the service who had lived outside of the State for longer than six months as an adult.

(4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available for five new staff members who worked directly with the preschool children.

### Non-Compliance Information

The following documentation was unavailable for inspection:

(2)

- (a) Two written validated references from sources other than past employers were on file for one adult who had previous employments that references were required to be sourced from. A second written validated reference from a past employer was required for two of the adults.
- (c) The garda vetting on file for one adult was from an educational body and not the required garda vetting for this adult from the service.
- (d) International police vetting was unavailable for one adult new to the service who had lived outside of the State for longer than six months as an adult.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(2)

- (a) Two written references were sought, validated and are now on file for one adult who had previous employments. A second written and validated references were obtained and are now on file for two other adults.

All new staff coming to the service will be required to provide a reference from the most recent previous employer and it must be validated before they commence in the service.

All staff files have been carefully reviewed to ensure full compliance with this regulation.

- (c) Garda vetting has been received for the adult in place of the educational body vetting on file. This disclosure is now on file.

In the future, the service will ensure that the correct Garda vetting is on file for any adults working directly with children in advance of their start date in the service

- (d) International police vetting has been obtained for one adult who is new to the service and had lived outside the country for longer than 6 months as an adult. This vetting is now on file.

In the future, all vetting and international police vetting must be obtained in advance of any staff commencing in the service. The service has updated interview processes in relation to this.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Copies of written, validated references, garda vetting and international police vetting documents.

### Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the service has been reviewed by the Inspectorate and found to have addressed the non-compliance found on inspection under Regulation 9.

### 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) There were 8 staff working directly with 34 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. Sufficient staff were available during the inspection to work directly with the children and provide relief cover for breaks ensuring that adequate numbers of staff were always available.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratios were maintained during the unannounced inspection as follows:  
Full Day Care playroom: 3 staff cared for 20 children aged 3-5 years of age attending full day care services.  
Sessional playroom: 4 staff cared for 13- 14 children aged from 3 to 4 years of age in the morning. One of the children moved to the Full Day Care playroom in the afternoon. The Sessional playroom was used to provide school age services in the afternoon.

The designated person in charge was observed to provide break and relief cover in playrooms when needed.

(8)  
There were always at least two adults on the premises during the inspection. Staff rosters showed that two adults were present during service opening hours.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (c) an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)  
A sample of 10 children’s records were selected for review from children currently enrolled in both playrooms in the service. The following details were recorded on the sampled children’s enrolment forms:

- (a) The names and date of birth of the children.
- (b) The date on which the child first attended the service.
- (d) The name, address and contact details for parents/guardians when the child was present in the service.
- (e) Details regarding authorisation for collection of the child.
- (f) Care plans in relation to individual needs of the children.
- (g) The name of the child’s registered medical practitioner with their telephone numbers.
- (h) Details regarding immunisations received by the child.

(3)  
(c) The written records were made available for inspection to the inspector on request.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1)

The child records required updating to include the following information:

- (i) Written consent from parents for medical treatment for their child in an emergency.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

(1)(i)

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

Written consent from parents for medical treatment has been added to the service enrolment forms in a clear manner.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Electronic evidence of update.

### Summary Comment

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

(1)(a)

- All the children attending the service at the time of inspection were aged over three years and the staff informed the inspector that did not need to sleep in the service. Stackable beds were provided and available if a child did want to sleep. Both rooms had rest areas with soft furnishings available that children relaxed in during the day.
- Nutritious food was provided by the service at regular intervals during the day. Some children availed of the breakfast provided by the service of cereal, toast and fruit. Mid-morning in the Sessional playroom, the children were observed to eat bread rolls, turkey slices, cheese and fruit. A warm main meal of

mashed potatoes, mince stew, carrots and cauliflower was observed to be eaten by the children in the Full day care playroom. Children's food choices were respected and children who wished to bring in their own food for snacks were facilitated. The children drank milk at lunchtime, and drinks stations with individual containers of water were set up in the playrooms and accessible to the children throughout the day to help themselves to. The staff sat with the children at mealtimes, supervising them closely and encouraging conversations.

- Children who were toilet-trained were encouraged and supported to use the toilet when they needed to with reminders given by staff to wash their hands. The sanitary units had signs with pictures to remind children how to wash their hands correctly. The staff changed children's nappies at regular intervals and when required. The staff assisted children with personal care when needed for example helping and supporting a young child to clean their nose with tissues. The staff promoted independence relative to each child's developmental stages, encouraging them to put on outdoor clothes and wellingtons and providing help when needed.
- Children's individual choices and needs were respected by the staff. Children were encouraged and supported to join in activities but were facilitated to play in other areas if they wished. There were daily routines displayed in photograph forms using photographs taken in the service. The photographs had Velcro backing and were removable/replaceable on the display with staff observed to use them to help children visualise activities.
- The staff managed the children's behaviour in a positive manner making them aware of upcoming changes between activities and supporting the transition. For example, the children in the Sessional playroom were told that it would soon be time to tidy up and prepare for circle-time. A song about cleaning up was played that the children and staff joined in singing. A blue sand-timer allowing visual recognition of time was available to support transitions and with the concept of sharing for the children. Staff comforted children if they were upset and got down to child eye level when speaking to them using warm positive language.
- An electronic system was used to help communicate with the parents by the staff for example providing information on what the children had eaten in the service. The system was used to send a weekly update of the children's activities in the service including photographs. Staff spoke with the parents at drop off and collection times providing information on their children.
- Comprehensive individual learning journals were available for each child with a large amount of information on their progress in the service, activities they had enjoyed with artwork and pictures.

Samples of the journals were available that had been sent home for parents to view and provide feedback in a 'Parent's Voice' section with the parents commenting very positively in writing in the journals. Where needed, individual care support plans for children outlining individual goals, strategies and actions were developed in consultation with relevant professionals and parents and available for inspection review.

- The playrooms had a range of toys and play equipment displayed at low levels allowing children access and facilitating their choice of play activities. Additional play equipment for rotation was stored in a large store cupboard off the Full day care playroom. When the inspector arrived at the service the children were enjoying free play in both playrooms and children showed the inspector their dress up hats, and their colourful paintings displayed on the playroom walls. Group activities were arranged by the staff during the day, for example the children in the Sessional playroom sat in groups at tables painting cherry blossoms onto tree templates. The inspector observed group circle time in the Sessional playroom where the children and staff engaged initially in a short, age-appropriate meditation session. The staff encouraged the children to participate in the group circle time conversations and sing songs about the days of the week and months to support recognition and learning. Children enjoyed messy play in groups with playdough and rollers/cutters.
- The children from both playrooms spent long periods of time playing outdoors in their respective enclosed outdoor play areas. The outdoor play areas were well-developed with different equipment available. The children were observed to play on ride-on-toys, at mud kitchens, small playhouses and with footballs. The children in the Sessional playroom had an activity system with swings that the children used while being closely supervised by staff members. A section of the outdoor area used by the children attending the Sessional children was sectioned off with recycled tyres for use by school aged children and was not used by the younger children. Both outdoor spaces had large shelters extending from the building with seating that the children and staff sat on at times and sand box activities that the children played with. Chalkboards on the walls were used to draw pictures. The children were observed to bang metal pots and pans together making 'music' and singing to it in the Full day care playroom outdoor mud kitchen area.

### 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 door to the service was secured on the inspector's arrival to the service preventing children from leaving unnoticed and allowing adults to control entry to the service. The inspector was admitted following production of identification documents and review by the designated person in charge and requested to sign in to the service's visitor record book. The internal doors between the playrooms and kitchen were secured with securing devices preventing children from entering the kitchen unnoticed. Safety gates were positioned at the internal entrance doors to the playrooms in addition to securing mechanisms allowing staff to control access. The outdoor area was enclosed and gates were secured to prevent children from leaving unnoticed. The toys and play equipment were in satisfactory condition and appropriate for the developmental stages of the children playing with them. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children.

##### Infection Control:

There was 'a clean as you go' system in place with staff observed to clean down surfaces and areas after use and keep records of the processes that were displayed in the relevant rooms. The staff prompted the children to wash their hands at key times including after outdoor play and using the toilet and before eating. The children washed their hands using warm water and liquid soap and dried them using paper towels that they disposed of in the foot pedal bins in their sanitary units. Nappies were disposed of in a foot pedal operated bin. Gloves and aprons were provided for staff to wear when changing children's nappies.

##### Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that none of the children needed to have medication administered to them while in the service. The staff showed awareness of the procedures to be followed in relation to storage and administration of medication to children should it be required.

##### Safe Sleep:

All of the children attending were aged over two years and no child needed to sleep during the inspection. Stackable beds were provided and readily available for use if a child chose to sleep while in the service. The staff were aware of safe monitoring procedures for sleeping children in the service.

##### Fire Safety:

The emergency exit routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one adult. However, this vetting disclosure 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'.

### Infection Control:

2. There was no lid on the waste bin containing items included used paper hand towels in the staff sanitary unit posing infection control risks. A similar non-compliance had been found on the previous inspection.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting has been obtained for this adult and is on file in the service. All Garda vetting will be checked regularly and applied for in advance of the three-year renewal.

#### Infection Control:

2. There is a new waste bin in the staff bathroom eliminating the infection control risk. This will be monitored and replaced if required. The waste bin will be kept in this bathroom going forward and will be replaced with another lidded bin as necessary.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. A copy of the garda vetting renewal.

#### Infection Control:

2. Photographic evidence of the replacement bin.

## Summary Comment

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

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was a certificate of insurance for full day care services covering the maximum number of children in the service with an expiry date of the 27 March 2026 on display in the office.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (d) An area of plaster on the wall near the door to the outdoor area in the Full Day Care playroom was crumbling and required repair.
- (e) A second adult sanitary unit was required as there were now more than eight adults working in the service at one time.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d) Area of plaster on the wall in the full day care room has been repaired. The walls will be monitored on a monthly basis and repaired if required.
- (e) The railings in the ability sanitary unit have been replaced and this unit is no longer 'under repair' and now suitable for use as a second sanitary unit to cater for the number of adults working in the service at one time. Any repairs to this sanitary unit will be done in a timely fashion to ensure that this unit remains in use for staff.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

#### Summary Comment

The non-compliance found under Regulation 29 has been addressed by the actions taken and evidence submitted to the Inspectorate by the service.