

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO044		
Name of Service:	Glór na Nóg -Aghamore Community Childcare		
Address of Service:	Killeen, Aghamore, Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo		
Eircode:	F35 AE65		
Name of Registered Provider:	Sonia Walsh		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	11/07/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM 21
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2 nd 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		

Description of service

Glór na Nóg -Aghamore Community Childcare is a community, non-profit service located in Aghamore, Co. Mayo. The service is registered to provide full day-care, parttime and sessional childcare services from 8:00 to 18:00hours to children aged from 18 months to six years of age. The premises is a purpose built, detached, single storey building with three playrooms named the Toddler, Junior Playschool and Senior Playschool playrooms. The Toddler playroom has an adjacent sleep area and there is a large lobby, kitchen, sanitary facilities and an office. The service has enclosed outdoor areas for each of the playrooms. The service is registered to provide school aged services.

Staffing

At the time of the inspection there were 17 staff working in the service including a manger, childcare staff, administrative staff and two kitchen staff. A cleaner is employed in the service but is not present during opening hours when children are present. 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 sections of regulations 9, 10, 11, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27 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.

The Junior Playschool playroom was found on inspection to be closed for the summer months therefore the inspection focused on the Toddler and Senior Playschool playrooms.

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

(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 named adults to deputise in the designated person in charge's absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection. A review of records showed that the designated person or a named deputy were always available in the service when children were present.

(2)

It was confirmed with the person in charge following review of documents and discussion with staff that there were 6 new adults working in the service during the operational hours since the most recent focused

inspection of the 7 January 2023. The vetting information for the other 11 adults had been reviewed on previous inspections. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available for the six new adults:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers in particular the most recent employers for four adults and one written validated reference from a past employer for two adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 17 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting was available for one adult.
- (4)
- Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for four adults new to the service since the last inspection who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) A written validated reference from one of the adult's most recent employer was required to be obtained by the service. A second reference from a past employer was required for one other adult.
- (4) There was insufficient evidence available to show that qualifications for two adults met the requirements of the regulation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a) Written references have been provided and validated for staff as requested. In the future new staff will be required to provide two validated references before their start date.
- (4) Proof of qualification has been provided by the two staff members. Where necessary, a letter from college will be sought prior to new employees joining the company in the future to confirm they have successfully completed relevant qualifications.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of written validated references and qualification documentation were submitted by the service.

Summary Comment

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The following policy reviewed by the inspector on inspection did not contain adequate detail to meet the requirements of the regulation as follows:

- (I) The service's policy on healthy eating did not adequately set out the measures taken to ensure that sufficient, suitable and nutritious food and drink is available to children dependent on their individual needs. The policy did not adequately describe how food is stored, prepared and served or that parent's/guardians choices are supported.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (I) The healthy eating policy has been updated. Policies will be updated more often and any changes to how food is stored, prepared or served will be updated on policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the updated healthy eating policy was submitted by the service.

Summary Comment

The action taken and evidence submitted has 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.*
- (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 5 adults working directly with 22 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation. Adequate 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 in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
- Toddler Playroom: In the morning two staff cared for eight children in the playroom. In the afternoon at least three staff worked with nine children including one child who joined the group from the Senior Playschool playroom at rest time.
- Senior Playschool playroom: 3 staff worked directly with 14 children in the morning and 12 children in the afternoon.
- (8)
- (a) The service ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample of attendance records reviewed.

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) The staff organised activities in the service to accommodate children's needs for eating, sleeping, toileting and playing depending on their age and developmental stage. Mealtimes were observed to be appropriately spaced out over the day as detailed under regulation 22. Meals were eaten in by children sitting at groups at tables in their respective playrooms. Plastic plates or bowls and age-appropriate cutlery were provided for the children to eat with. The children were closely supervised by staff during meals and encouraged and supported to feed themselves.
- There were a scheduled rest/sleep time for children in the Toddler playroom with a child from the Senior Playschool playroom who needed to sleep joining the group at this time. Stackable beds and cots were available in the Toddler playroom sleep area if children showed signs of tiredness and needed to sleep outside of this time. Rest areas with soft seating were also available in both playrooms for children to relax and rest in. Several children in the Senior Playschool playroom were observed to use their rest area to relax in after their mid-morning meal.
- Children's nappies were observed to be changed by staff when children's individual needs dictated. The staff were observed to chat and engage with the children during the nappy changes. Older children who were able to use the toilet independently were supported by the staff to do so but were within earshot of staff if they needed help. Boxes of tissues were available in the playrooms for children to clean their noses with as needed. The children were encouraged and reminded to wash their hands, supervised and helped by staff as needed at appropriate times for example at mealtimes, after using the toilet and nappy changes and after outdoor play. A staff member was observed to prompt a child to clean their face that was dirty after the mid-morning meal. The staff encouraged children to put on their coats and outdoor clothes by themselves as much as possible when getting ready to play outdoors.

All children spent time playing outdoors during the inspection in the enclosed outdoor play areas with the children from the Senior Playschool playroom using the Junior Playschool outdoor play area on the day. The outdoor play equipment provided was appropriate for their ages and stages of developmental. For example, the children from the Toddler playroom played with large toy farm animals including a sheep and a pig. Outdoor play equipment supported and encouraged children to be physically active such as the ride on toys, climbing systems and slides that the children played on. Both outdoor areas used on the day had sheltered areas to provide protection in poor weather and held play items such as the sand tables that children played in.

The Toddler and Senior Playschool playrooms were well equipped with a range of toys displayed in low-level storage systems allowing children to chose play activities and develop their independence. During the inspection children in the Senior Playschool room enjoyed messy play in groups at a sand table while others played with construction toys and dress up outfits. The staff in the Senior Playschool playroom had set up messy play activities for the children. These included the playdough made by the staff on the day placed on a table with plastic rollers that some children chose to play with. Some of the children in the Toddler playroom sat and looked at books with staff in the Toddler playroom after dinner and before their rest time.

The staff prepared children for upcoming transitions for example letting them know that it would be soon time to play outside after indoor play in the Senior Playschool playroom. A small bell was used by staff to gain children's attention at times. The daily routines were displayed at low levels in picture form in the playrooms and a child in the Toddler playroom was observed to look at them and touch them. The staff engaged with the children during their play and took active parts in their activities at times for example blowing bubbles and drawing pictures with coloured chalks with them when playing outside. The staff told the inspector that an electronic system was used to communicate with parents in addition to verbal handovers of information at collection and drop of times. The electronic system recorded information relating to eating and drinking, sleep and toileting/nappy changes. Individual learning journals were kept for each child including samples of their artwork and observations regarding their activities and progress. An open day for prospective parents and children had been held in the service the previous weekend with information packs given to families. The staff were warm in their approaches to and interactions with the children providing praise and encouragement to them. The staff used opportunities for learning during

play for example conversation with children about bunting and flags that were flying outside the building and how the wind was making them move.

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

Mealtimes were observed to be appropriately scheduled in response to children’s needs on the day of the inspection. The midmorning snack provided by the service was potato waffles, ham and a selection of chopped fruits including bananas and grapes. The staff worked in partnership with parents regarding food choices and a child in the Senior Playschool playroom ate yoghurt provided from home. The main meal of the day that was freshly prepared in the service was mashed potato, broccoli, carrots and boiled bacon and was consistent with the three-week rolling menu displayed in the service for parent’s information. Additional servings of food were provided for some children in the Toddler playroom who requested it. Drinks of water were available to the children in individual drink containers in the playrooms throughout the inspection. Some children were observed to be given drinks of milk when they requested it in the Toddler playroom.

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 gate at the front of the building had a new button release mechanism to gain access to the area. There was a buzzer control securing system on the internal entrance door to the service allowing staff to control access. The inspector was admitted by staff following production of identification documents and signing the visitor record book. The doors to the outdoor areas were secured when the children were playing indoors. Low level windows had restrictors in place to prevent children from leaving areas unnoticed. The kitchen was inaccessible to the children. Toys and play equipment in use were in good condition and suitable for the ages and

stages of the children using them. Cleaning products were stored at high levels out of reach of children in the playrooms and low-level cupboards had restrictor devices where needed to prevent children from accessing them. The waste bins were fenced off from the outdoor play areas and inaccessible to children. A large silver/grey metal box in the Senior Playschool outdoor area that was not in use on the day was fenced off to prevent access by children. Sharp items such as scissors were stored out of reach of children in the Toddler playroom. Blind cords on windows were secured using appropriate safety devices.

Infection Control:

The service was found to be clean, and staff were observed to clean down surfaces such as tables after use. Cleaning schedules were provided to guide staff for example in relation to the cleaning of toys. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided for handwashing and drying purposes with children and staff cleaning their hands regularly. Aprons and gloves were used appropriately by staff when changing children's nappies with changing mats cleaned down after use in accordance with the nappy changing procedures displayed in the area. Appropriate foot-pedal operated bins were used for the disposal of nappies. There were separate storage areas for children's personal items such as nappies and cleansing wipes. Individual storage containers were provided for children's soothers in the Toddler Playroom. Clean, individual bed linen was provided for the cots and stackable beds and laundered regularly.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was observed to be administered by staff to children during the inspection.

Safe Sleep:

Designated standard cots were provided for rest and sleep for children under two years of age with stackable beds provided for the older children in an area off the Toddler playroom. The air temperature of the sleep area was recorded at 19.7°C. Staff were observed to stay in the sleep area while the children slept and regularly check their colour, position and breathing patterns at ten-minute intervals. Records of these sleep checks were recorded on an electronic system.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exits were observed to be unobstructed during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There were several small metal hooks attached at low levels to the wall above soft seating in the rest area of the Senior Playschool room. These metal hooks posed a risk of injury to children using the area.

Infection Control:

2. There were some tears in the covers of some of the soft seats exposing the foam filling in the Senior Playschool room. This posed difficulties for effective cleaning and a potential infection control risk.

Safe Sleep:

3. Two children who were able to walk were placed to sleep in cots in all-in-one sleeping bags with neck and armholes. All-in-one sleeping bags with neck and armholes are not recommended for children who can stand and walk around a cot.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The metal hooks have been removed. More care will be taken in future regarding placement of hooks.

Infection Control:

2. The soft seats with tears have been removed. Seating and furniture will be checked more often for wear and tear and items removed or repaired if necessary.

Safe Sleep:

3. All sleep bags have been sent home and will no longer be used. The service will no longer use sleep bags during sleep time for any children.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the service have been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and been found to have addressed the regulatory non-compliance found on inspection.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Fire drills were conducted monthly in the service with written records of the fire drills kept by the staff. The most recent fire drill record showed that it was undertaken on the 2 July 2024.
 - (b) The service kept a record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms. The records showed that the firefighting equipment was last maintained on the 9 February 2024 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 6 January 2024.
- (2)
- (c) The records were made available by the staff to the inspector in the service on request.
- (4) Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed on the walls of the playroom near the main entrance door.

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 children were supervised by the adults mainly by sight, but older children were out of view remaining within earshot of the adults if using the toilet independently. Staff linked in with each other when children were going indoors to use the toilet and named the children who were under their care. Frequent checks of the numbers of children were undertaken by the staff with attendance records updated when children arrived to and left the service. The required adult: child ratios were adhered to during the inspection. When the children were playing outdoors the staff positioned themselves so that a staff member could observe the children in all areas of the outdoor spaces. At mealtimes the staff were observed to supervise the children closely assisting them where necessary.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had a certificate of insurance for a maximum of 80 children attending full day care services on display in the entrance hallway with an expiry date of the 27 March 2025.

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,

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. Sections of the metal shutters surrounding entrance doors leading from the outdoor areas to the Senior Playschool and Toddler playrooms had rusted and required maintenance.
 2. Sections of the wood panels of the storage area built under the canopy of the outdoor area off the Senior playschool room were damaged with splinters protruding. This posed a potential injury risk to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The metal shutter surroundings have been repaired. The metal shutters will be checked more often for wear and tear and repaired when necessary.
2. Sections of the storage shed wooden panels have been replaced. The wooden panels will be checked more often for wear and tear and repaired when necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the repairs was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate by the service

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the regulatory non-compliance found on inspection.