

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO050
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Sasta Early Learning Centre
-------------------------	-----------------------------

Address of Service:	Barrack Street, Charlestown, Co. Mayo
----------------------------	---------------------------------------

Eircode:	F12 FW24
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Rebecca Ryan
-------------------------------------	--------------

Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

Date of Inspection:	04/03/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	21
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Sasta Early Learning Centre is a community service in Charlestown, County Mayo. The service is registered to provide parttime and sessional services for children aged from one to six years of age. The service opens from 09:00-14:00 hours and operates a term-time schedule. The service is in a single storey, purpose-built facility and has three playrooms, a sleep room, sanitary accommodation, kitchen and office area. The service has outdoor areas located to the side and rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are eight staff working in the service. One of the staff members is employed through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). There was an adult on student placement in the service at the time of inspection. 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, 11, 15, 19, 23 and 27; 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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child and Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Little Buds and Blooms 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, 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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise in the service.
- (b) Both the designated person in charge and deputy were present in the service during the unannounced inspection.
- (2) There were nine staff adults including a student on work placement in the service at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documentation had been obtained for the adults:
- (a) Two written validated references from previous employers particularly their most recent employer for six adults. One written validated reference from their past employer for three adults.
 - (b) One written validated reference from sources other than a previous employer for two adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all nine 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 for two adults who had lived outside of the State for more than six months as adults.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for seven staff members who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a) A second validated reference from a past employer was required for one adult.
- (d) International police vetting was required for one adult who had lived outside of the state for longer than six months as an adult.
- (4) There was insufficient evidence available to show that the qualification for one adult met the requirements of the regulation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)(a) The second reference for the staff member has been received. Regular checks will be carried out on vetting documents and followed up as needed.
- (2)(d) The international police vetting has been applied for. Regular checks will be carried out. The person in charge will always make sure that an International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC) is obtained where required.
- (4) The staff member has received their qualification certificate now and has applied to relevant body for confirmation that it is a recognised qualification. The service will ensure that the relevant authorities are consulted with when needed before employment in future.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the reference and a copy of the ICPC certificate was submitted.

Summary Comment

The regulatory non-compliances found on inspection under sections (9)(2)(a) and (9)(2)(d) have been addressed by the actions taken and evidence submitted by the service. However, the non-compliance found under (9) (4) remains outstanding until evidence to demonstrate qualification equivalence for the adult is submitted to the Inspectorate.

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.

(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) An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the pre-school service. There were 7 adults working directly with 44 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection. 7 adults worked directly with the 21 children who availed of parttime services in the afternoon following the sessional service.

(2) Part-time services were provided for 21 children from 12:00 hours to 14:00 hours. The minimum required adult to child ratios of 1:5 for children aged from one to two years, 1:6 for children aged between two to three years of age and 1:8 for children aged between three and six years of age were maintained during the provision of the part-time service.

(5) The minimum sessional required ratio of adults to children was maintained in the service. The adult: child ratios for sessional services provided in the morning were as follows:

- 2 adults cared for 9 in the Little Buds playroom. 5 of the children were aged from one to two years and 4 children were aged two years of age.
- 2 adults cared for 14 children aged from three years and over in the Blooms playroom.
- 2 adults cared for 21 children aged over four years of age in the Blooms playroom.

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) to (i)

A sample of ten children's records across the children attending the three playrooms were selected for review by the inspector. The children's records were found to contain the information required under the regulation.

(3) (c)

The required information was made readily available to the inspector by the designated person in charge on request.

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 children's food was provided from home. Older children sat in groups at low level tables at mealtimes to eat their food. Some of the younger children sat at individual table with trays. The staff allowed the children to take their time eating without being rushed and encouraged them to feed themselves with help given if needed.

Pancake Tuesday was observed to be celebrated in the Blooms playroom with pancakes and chopped fruit provided for the children. The staff gave the children the chopped fruit before the pancakes and encouraged children who were hesitant to try the fruit.

Some younger children wore bibs to protect their clothing when eating. The staff in the Little Buds playroom were observed to help children clean their faces and hands after eating their morning snack. Children were prompted and supported to wash their hands at key moments such as before and after eating and following using the toilet facilities. The children who were able to, used the toilet when they wanted to, with support given by staff to those who required it. Staff changed children's nappies when needed.

Rest areas with soft seating were provided in the playrooms and children in the Blooms playroom were observed to use the rest areas when they wanted to. The staff informed the inspector that none of the children attending needed to sleep when in the service. Sleep facilities were available to children should they be needed.

The weather on the day of the inspection was dry and the playrooms had direct access to their respective outdoor areas. The staff left the doors leading to the outdoor areas open at times to allow a free flow of children indoors and outdoors with children able to choose where they wanted to play. There was a wide range of toys and play equipment in each of the playrooms suitable for the age range of children in the rooms such as home areas, doll areas, construction and farm toys. The Little Buds playroom that catered for children from one year of age had low level soft padded matting and items for crawling and moving on. The playrooms had selections of age-appropriate books accessible to the children and stories were read to children by staff helping to encourage interest in books. Equipment for art and crafts were provided in the rooms and children in the Little Buds playroom enjoyed colouring pictures during the day. Children in the Blooms playroom were observed to be free to choose if they wanted to join in a group activity and supported if they preferred a different play activity.

The outdoor area was well developed and divided into sections with a range of play activities for children. The three playrooms had direct access to a section of the play area. Shelters extended from the building in places providing shelter for children when the weather was poor. There was an enclosed mud area in the section used by the Bloom's playroom, but it was not used on the day. This area had a wooden mud kitchen, digging utensils and wheelbarrows. Children had wellington boots and outdoor clothing to wear when using the space. Children were observed to play with toys encouraging physical activity and gross motor development such as ride on toys, balance systems, slides and rockers. There were opportunities for messy play including sand boxes with covers for when not in use.

The staff managed the children's behaviour in a positive way using positive language with them. The Bloom's playroom had a "classroom agreement" with simple rules such as "we share our toys in preschool" which staff

were observed to remind children of. Staff sang songs with the children for example in the Little Buds playroom singing “wind the bobbin up” with children clapping hands along to the song. There were birthday walls in the playrooms with photographs of the children encouraging a sense of belonging in the setting.

The staff used electronic messaging systems to assist communication with parents providing updates on service information. Scrap books were created for the children by the staff with examples of their artwork, photographs and information on observations that they made on the children. The staff explained to the inspector that these scrapbooks were sent home for parents to view periodically, and an example viewed by the inspector had been signed by parents.

Non-Compliance Information

- A group activity in the Blooms playroom was organised using boards and coloured strings. This play equipment was stored at a height and two children were observed to climb on chairs to try to access the equipment which was not easily accessible to them.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Play equipment is always stored in a low shelving unit, however that day a staff member had left them there for a short time. A picture has been submitted showing where the items are normally stored.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

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

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 door was secured when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and remained secured during the inspection preventing people from entering without permission. The inspector was admitted to the service by the designated person in charge following production of identification documentation. The gates to the outdoor areas were secured during the inspection when children were playing outdoors preventing children from leaving the areas unnoticed. The staff carried out safety checks each day to identify potential hazards and kept records on checklists in the rooms. Cleaning products used in the playrooms were stored out of reach of children. Thick padding was in place on metal posts of outdoor shelter beside the building to reduce the risk of accidental injury to a child.

Infection Control:

The children and staff washed their hands at key times such as before eating using warm water and liquid soap and dried them with paper towels. Perishable food items including meat and dairy products were stored in the service refrigerators. Records of cleaning were kept by the staff in line with the service's cleaning schedules. Staff were observed to clean down surfaces after use for example tables after mealtime. There was separate storage for personal items in the nappy change area. Aprons and gloves were provided for staff to wear when changing children's nappies.

Administration of Medication:

There was no medication observed to be administered to a child during the inspection. During discussion, the staff showed familiarity with procedures regarding the administration of medication including a template record that was required to be completed.

Safe Sleep:

There was a separate sleep room provided in the service with standard cots and stackable beds available if needed. Individual storage containers with clean cot and bed linen were provided. The room air temperature was recorded at 18.7°C. There was a system in place to record observations made by staff of sleeping children as required.

Fire Safety:

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

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for the nine adults. However, one of these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years and were not in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. A child had whole grapes which posed a potential choking hazard in their lunch food provided from home in one of the playrooms. When this was highlighted to the staff by the inspector, the grapes were removed, chopped and returned to the child.
3. Several pieces of equipment for the children were damaged with potential pinch points that could cause an injury to a child. These included a water table and a wooden play table in the outdoor area used by the Blooms playroom and a storage unit with a broken drawer runner in the Little Buds playroom. It is acknowledged that the service removed the tables on the day of the inspection.
4. The door to the emersion heater storage area with electrical controls and wiring was unsecured during the inspection with the potential for a child to access the area.

Infection Control:

5. The waste bins provided in the large children's sanitary area and staff sanitary area were push top lid operated and not the required foot pedal operated bins.
6. A small couch in the Blooms playroom had tears in the covering exposing foam posing difficulties with effective cleaning.

Administration of Medication:

7. Medication in the Little Buds playroom was stored in a child's bag at a low level with the potential for a child to access the medication. It is acknowledged that the medication was removed and stored at a high level by staff during the inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. An application has been made for the garda vetting. There will be regular checks undertaken by staff to ensure vetting is up to date.

2. Messages have been sent by the service to parents requesting that grapes for children's lunches are cut. The staff are checking lunch boxes to ensure grapes are being cut/prepared.
3. All the equipment highlighted by the inspector has been removed. There will be regular checks on equipment by staff.
4. The lock on the door to the emersion heater has been fixed and door is now secured. There will be regular checks on securing devices to ensure they are in working order.

Infection Control:

5. The bin has been replaced and only pedal operated bins will be used.
6. The couch has now been replaced and there will be regular checks on the seating.

Administration of Medication:

7. Medication is now stored in the kitchen in a cupboard for medicine storage.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of the garda vetting document, photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

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

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 were out of sight remaining within earshot of the adults when using the toilet independently. At times the doors leading from the Little Buds and Blooms playrooms were opened to allow free flow of children in and out of the playrooms depending on whether children wanted to play inside or outdoors. The staff were observed link in with each other to ensure adequate staff supervised the children and staff were observed to follow children to keep them in their sights. At lunch time, the staff were observed to sit with the children to supervise them closely when they ate their food in the Little Buds playroom.

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) Taps at the wash hand basins in the large children's sanitary unit were very corroded and posed difficulties for cleaning.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in a written response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) The taps have been replaced and will be checked regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

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