

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015MO065 |
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| Name of Service: | Knockmore Rathduff Butterflies Community Playschool |
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| Address of Service: | Knockmore Resource Centre, Knockmore Village, Ballina, Co. Mayo |
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| Eircode: | F26 E5D0 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Martina Gardiner |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 04/03/2026 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 18 | PM | 10 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo. |
| Inspection undertaken by: | M Farrell |
| Title: | Early Years Inspector |

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable. |
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Description of service

Knockmore Rathduff Butterflies Community Playschool is a community-operated sessional service located in Knockmore in Co. Mayo. The service is registered to provide full day care and sessional services for children aged from two to six years of age. The service hours of operation are from 9:00 to 15:30 hours with sessional services operating from 09:00-12:00 hours. The service is in a designated purpose-built section of a community resource centre. There is one large playroom, an office area, utility area and sanitary accommodation. The service has a large well developed enclosed outdoor play area at the rear of the building that is directly accessible from the playroom.

Staffing

There are three staff in the service including a staff member employed under the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. The registered provider does not work directly in the service.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 11, 19, 22, 23, 27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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 and a named adult to deputise in the event of her absence.
(b) The designated person in charge was present in the service 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 one new staff member who worked directly with the children had been employed since the previous inspection. This staff member's file was reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for two staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

The following information was available on file;

- (a) One written validated reference from a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three adults whose files were reviewed. 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 not required for the staff member.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available for the three staff who worked directly with the preschool children.

Non-Compliance Information

The following vetting information was unavailable for inspection:

- (2)
 - (a) A second written validated reference from the staff member's most recent past employer was required to be obtained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
 - (a)

The staff member was requested to provide a second employer reference which was validated by the person in charge and placed on file.

The service's policies was updated to prevent similar future non-compliance.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of a written validated employer reference and the revised policy.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted to the Inspectorate by the registered provider have been reviewed and found to have addressed the non-compliance found under Regulation 9 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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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 two staff working with 18 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. A sample of written records reviewed showed that there was always an adequate number of staff provided to work directly with the children in the service.
- (4) The minimum adult to child ratios were maintained during the unannounced inspection. 18 children were cared for by 2 adults during the sessional service provision and 2 adults cared for 10 children during the full day care service provision.
- (8)(a) There were always at least two adults on the premises during the inspection. Staff rosters and discussion with staff found that two adults were present during service opening hours.

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)

- Children were enjoying free play when the inspector arrived to the service for example some children played in a group with sand at a sand table, while other children made buildings using blocks. Group activities such as a picture colouring activity sitting in groups at tables where staff used opportunities to encourage colour recognition and discussions were observed during the inspection. At one stage, a group of children worked as a team to build a wooden road together on the floor in the carpeted area of the playroom.
- There was free movement of the children within the playroom with children moving around and choosing the toys that they would like to play with. A wide variety of toys and play equipment was accessible at low levels including well equipped kitchen area, dolls with buggies, small world toys, and a large amount of tabletop activities including linking, threading and puzzles. Age-appropriate books were displayed with the covers facing outwards so children could see the content of the books helping them to choose a book that interested them. Art and craft supplies were provided along with an art easel and there was a large collage painting of a chicken on display in the playroom made by the children and staff as a group. A community photographic wall display with photographs of local schools, shop, sports and churches helped to create a sense of belonging in the community in the service.
- The children spent time playing outdoors in the well-developed enclosed outdoor area accessible from the playroom and were observed to run around laughing happily. There were numerous opportunities for play outdoors including physical activities with ride on toys, balance beams and a playhouse with slide. Children were observed to play with wheelbarrows, digging stones and moving them around. An enclosed sand area was not used during the inspection. The outdoor area also had a sheltered space with seating appropriate for staff and children including a colourful wooden 'buddy bench'. Staff organised physical activity indoors at one stage with the children joining in enthusiastically to action songs with music playing.

- The service's daily routine was displayed in photograph form at a low level so that children could see it in the playroom and was flexible depending on children's needs. Individual support plans were available for children where needed with clear actions and goals described and the staff were familiar with these plans.
- The children sat in groups at tables in the playroom when eating their meal with staff supervising them and encouraging conversations making mealtimes sociable. Children cues were acted on and when a child was hungry early in the session, they were facilitated by the staff to eat at that time.
- The staff let children know that transitions between activities were approaching to prepare them. A 'clean-up' song was played when it was time to tidy up toys, and staff and children sang it together while tidying up.
- Children were prompted by the staff to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and playing outdoors and with sand. Boxes of tissues were accessible to the children to clean their noses with.
- Positive, warm interactions were observed between the staff and children and the staff provided appropriate levels of praise and encouragement to their children for their work. The staff used positive methods to manage the behaviour of the children. The concept of sharing was focused on when there was a disagreement between children in relation to a toy that they both wanted to play with. The staff used a coloured sand timer to visually represent time and support learning around sharing. There was a keyworker system in place in the service and parents were aware of their children's key worker groups. The children were relaxed and comfortable in the setting and approached the inspector, chatting with her and asking her questions and pointing out photographs on the family wall.
- Each child had an individual learning journal containing observations that the staff made of the children's progress in the service and samples of their art. The books contained individual information on their likes and photographs of them engaging in different activities such as an outing to post Christmas cards and Santa's visit to the service. The journals were sent home for parents and families to view at different times of the year according to the staff. The staff met the parents when handing over care of the children at the end of the sessional service and were observed to greet them warmly and chat about the child's day in the service. Electronic mail was also used by the staff to provide parents with updates and service information.
- 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. Sleep mats were provided and available if a child did want to sleep. The playroom had a rest area with soft furnishings available that children

relaxed in during the day. One child was observed to relax in the rest area and line up teddies on large cushions 'to have a sleep'.

- Children who were toilet trained were encouraged and supported to use the toilet when they needed to. The staff supported children who were in the process of toilet training working in partnership with the children's parents.

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

The service ensured that nutritious food was offered to the children at regular intervals in the service. A breakfast of cereal was offered but the staff said that few children were availing of this at the present time having already eaten breakfast at home each morning.

The main meal was provided by the resource centre and eaten early at 11:30am. On the day, a warm meal of mashed potatoes, sausages and beans and a choice of gravy was provided with extra portions available for children who wanted it. Children attending the sessional service ate food provided from home at this time. The food included yoghurts, rice-cakes, cheese, fruit and sandwiches. Parents were provided with advice on foods that are allowed in the service at enrolment of their child in a parent information leaflet.

A four-week varied menu was provided to the parents at the start of each month providing details of the food to be offered to the children.

Drinks of water were available at all times if a child was thirsty and wanted a drink.

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 doors to the service from the community centre hallway were secured on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. The staff controlled the access of people to and from the service ensuring that no children left the service unnoticed, and that people did not enter without authorisation. The outdoor area was enclosed and gates secured when the children were playing outdoors to prevent children from leaving the area. The toys and play equipment were in good condition and suitable for age range of the children using them. Cleaning products were stored in the secured storage cupboard and inaccessible by the children. Sharp items, for example scissors, were stored out of reach of children on high shelving.

Infection Control:

The children's snacks containing perishable items were appropriately stored in a refrigerator in the service. The service was observed to be very clean with staff cleaning surfaces when needed for example tables after meals and painting activities. Cleaning schedules were available, and the staff kept written records available in the relevant areas of the cleaning processes carried out in the service. Staff placed emphasis on handwashing at key moments for example before eating, after outdoor and messy play and following using the toilet. Foot pedal operated bins were provided and observed to be used by staff for waste disposal in the service.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that none of the children needed medication to be administered to them while in the service. Systems were in place to record administration of medication if needed.

Safe Sleep:

All the children were aged over 2 years and none of the children slept during the inspection. The staff were aware of the procedures in relation to safe sleep including observations to be made and recorded. Wipeable sleep mats were provided if a child needed to sleep while in the service.

Fire Safety:

The fire exits and routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Outing:

The staff informed the inspector that outings are undertaken by the service for example at Christmas time the staff and children walked to a nearby shop to post letters. The staff described the processes required when undertaking an outing including risk assessment and bringing a mobile phone and first aid supplies on an outing.

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 observed to be always supervised by the staff during the inspection. At snack time and dinnertime in the playrooms, the staff were observed to sit beside the children, chatting with them while supervising them closely. When children played outside in the enclosed outdoor areas, the staff moved around allowing them to keep the children in their line of vision. The children who were toilet-trained used the toilets by themselves when they needed to but were within earshot of staff members if they needed any help.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A certificate of insurance for full day care services covering the maximum number of 22 children registered with an expiry date of the 27 March 2026 was made available by the service for inspection.