

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015MO090

Name of Service: Comharchumann Naíonra Béal an Átha Teo

Address of Service: Greenhills Childcare Centre, Greenhills Estate, Ballina, Co. Mayo

Eircode: F26 T267

Name of Registered Provider: Christine Noone

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 03/10/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	-
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Comharchumann Naíonra Béal an Átha Teo is a sessional service located in a residential area in Ballina, County Mayo. The service is registered to cater for children aged from 2 to 6 years of age. The service provides morning sessions from 9:00-12:00 hours and afternoon sessions from 12:30-15:30 hours. The premises was purpose built to provide childcare services. The building has a large lobby, office, kitchen, sanitary accommodation and two large playrooms. One playroom is located on the ground floor and there is a second playroom located on the first floor which is not currently in use. The children have access from the ground floor playroom to an enclosed outdoor play area.

Staffing

There are four staff working in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children. Two of the staff are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model. A student was present on transition year placement in the service at the time of the inspection.

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 regulations 9, 11, 19, 24, 25, 26 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 registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge in the service and there was a named person to deputise in her absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present on the inspector's unannounced arrival at the service and was present throughout the inspection. The attendance records showed that the designated person in charge or deputy were present in the service during opening hours.
- (2) Discussion with the deputy designated person in charge and review of records found that there were four staff working in the service at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documentation was available for the staff:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for two staff members. One written validated reference from past employers for four staff.
- (b) One written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for two staff.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all four staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
- (d) International police vetting documents were not required or the four staff.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for four staff members who worked directly with the children

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service during the inspection.
On the morning of the unannounced inspection there were 3 adults working directly with 13 children.
- (3) The minimum ratio for sessional services providing care to children over 2 ½ years of 1 adult to each 11 children was adhered to with 3 adults working directly with 13 children during the 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)
There was a key worker system in the service with staff assigned to groups of children. The staff completed written records of observations of the children and their progress in the service in their keyworker groups that were shared with parents. The staff were observed to praise children for their efforts when painting and playing and encouraged positive behaviour. A step-by-step system for dealing with behaviour issues if they arose was on display in the playroom to support staff. There were emotion charts on the playroom walls with photographs of children with different expressions such as happy, sad, tired, angry that could be used to help children express their feelings if needed. A communication board with symbols and pictures of facial

expressions was also available in the outdoor play area. The staff said the communication board had been very helpful at times in assisting when communication difficulties arose with children.

The staff used Irish words and phrases such as “glan suas”/(clean up) intermixed with English during the session and encouraged the use of Irish by the children. Irish songs were sung with the children at different times such as a song about washing hands/“nigh do lamha” before washing hands at snack time. A book focusing on the colour green was read to the children in Irish and the children answered the staff with Irish words such as “cóta glas”/(green coat), “buidéal glas”/(green bottle) and “mala glas”/(green bag).

A daily routine ‘*clár leathuil*’ was displayed in the playroom and in the lobby for parent’s information. The staff informed the inspector that an electronic messaging system was in use to help communicate with parents. Photographs of the children’s activities in the service were sent to parents on a weekly basis to keep them informed. The staff were observed to share information with parents/guardians at collection times. There was a playroom helper system in place where each child on rotation helped the staff with different tasks. Examples included handing out the children’s lunches at snack time and assisting staff with describing the weather during group time. There was evidence of curriculum planning using information on children’s emerging interests on a notice board. Numerous photographs of children engaging in play activities and celebrations were displayed on the playroom walls.

The playroom was laid out in defined interest areas with the equipment labelled in Irish. The equipment was accessible to the children who moved around freely in the room selecting the toys and play equipment that they wanted to play with. The children were observed to play with a range of equipment for example table-top games and puzzles, dolls, dress up, with a water table and at a farm themed activity table where the staff chatted with them about farm animals. When children decided that they would like to paint, one of the staff members directed them to the aprons used to protect clothes during messy play and encouraged them to wear them. The staff engaged with the children during play and chatted to them about their interests for example an upcoming local gaelic football final. The day of the inspection was wet and windy, but the children were able to play outdoors supervised by the staff in the sheltered area of the outdoor space directly accessible from the ground floor playroom.

The children were encouraged to be as independent as possible and to use the toilet by themselves when they needed to. The staff gave support to children who needed help using the toilet. The children were encouraged to put wastepaper hand towels in the “bosca bruscair”/waste bin after washing and drying their hands. There were boxes of tissues accessible at low levels for the children to clean their noses with.

The children's snacks were provided from home. They sat in groups at tables to eat them supervised by the staff who chatted with them and encouraged conversations between the children. A water dispenser and plastic cups were provided in the playroom and children could access drinks at all times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

- (1) All the children in attendance during the inspection were checked in and out of the service by an employee. Written records were available in the service of the checking in and out of the children by the staff.
- (3) (a) The registered provider approved the entry of the inspector following review of identification documents.
- (b) Attendance details for the inspector were recorded in a visitor book which contained records for previous visitors to the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

- (1) Three staff members held up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training certificates. At least one staff member with FAR training was present in the service when children were present and available to provide first aid if needed.
- (2) (a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in a conspicuous place at a high level in the playroom. The first aid box had adequate supplies for the number of children attending.
- (b) The first aid equipment was readily available if needed for a child.

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) Written records of the monthly fire drills undertaken in the service were kept by the staff. Records showed that the last fire drill was undertaken on the 8 September 2025.
- (b) Records were available of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The records showed that the firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 25 June 2025 and the smoke alarms were last maintained on 1 September 2025.
- (2) (c) The records were made available to the inspector by the registered provider in the service
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed with an escape plan '*plean eigeandála agus tine*' if a fire occurred in the service were clearly displayed in the playroom.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had an insurance certificate on display for a maximum of 22 children attending sessional services at any one time with an expiry date of the 27 March 2026.