

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015MO108

Name of Service: St. Tiernan's Community Playgroup

Address of Service: Chapel Road, Crossmolina, Co. Mayo

Eircode: F26 A593

Name of Registered Provider: Christine Hegarty

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 03/10/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	7

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's 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

St. Tiernan's Community Playgroup is a community-based, sessional service based in Crossmolina, County Mayo. The service is registered to cater for children aged from two to six years of age. The service provides a morning session from 9:00-12:00 hours and an afternoon session from 12:15-15:15 hours. There is one large playroom, a kitchenette, office and sanitary facilities in the building that was purpose built for childcare provision. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the side and rear of the premises where children have access to outdoor play equipment.

Staffing

There are four staff employed in the service including one adult employed under an employment scheme. The registered provider is not involved in the day-to-day operation of 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28; however, on inspection non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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

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

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

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

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

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

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

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

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a person to deputise in her absence in the service.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and deputy were present in the service throughout the inspection. The staff roster showed that either the designated person in charge or deputy were always available in the service during operating hours.
- (2) There were four staff members working in the service. The following vetting documents were available on file in the service for the four staff members:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers for three staff members and one written validated reference for a fourth staff member.
 - (b) One written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for one staff member.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the four staff. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.

(4) There was evidence available on file to show that the three staff members who worked directly with the children held the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent qualification.

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. There were 3 adults working directly with 14 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection. A further two children arrived bringing the total number of children to 16. A fourth adult was present from 9:40 hours but was not counted in the adult: child ratios.

(3) The minimum ratio for a sessional service of 1 adult to each 11 children was adhered to with 3 adults working directly with a maximum of 16 children during the inspection.

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 random sample of ten of children's records were selected across the morning and afternoon sessions and reviewed by the inspector. Each of the children's records was found to contain the information required under the regulation.

(3) (c)

The designated person in charge made the required information available to the inspector when requested to.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The following information was available in the service:

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the staff members recorded in staff files.
The service's statement of purpose and function contained:
- (b) Information on the type of service type and ages of children that the service is registered to provide services to,
- (c) The adult: child ratios provided in the service,
- (d) The service's type of care or programme,
- (e) The facilities available in the service.
- (f) The service's hours of opening and fees were displayed in the service.

- (g) There were electronic and written copies of the service’s policies, procedures and statements as required under Regulation 10. The policies were in the process of being updated.
 - (h) Details of the daily attendance of each pre-school child recorded on a daily attendance sheets.
 - (i) There was a typed copy of the staff roster available.
 - (j) There was a recording system to record any medication administered to children while attending the service to include signed parental consent.
 - (k) An accident/incident book was available to record details of any accident, injury or incident involving children attending the service. A sample of records reviewed found that the records had been signed by the child’s parent/guardians and staff members.
- (3)
- The records were made available in the service to the inspector by the designated person on request.

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 entrance door was secured on the inspector’s unannounced arrival to the service and remained secured during the inspection with staff controlling access to the building. There was a high positioned door handle on the internal door between the playroom and entrance hallway preventing children from leaving the playroom unnoticed. The half-door to the kitchenette area was secured by staff to prevent children accessing this space. Cleaning products were stored in the kitchenette out of reach of the children. Blind cords on the windows in the service were secured with securing devices. The toys and play equipment in use were clean, in satisfactory condition and suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children using during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The staff were observed to supervise the children washing their hands after using the toilet and before eating food. The children and staff washed their hands with liquid soap and paper towels were used to dry hands and then disposed of in foot pedal operated bins. The children’s snacks that contained perishable food items were stored in a refrigerator in the kitchenette. The tables and surfaces were cleaned down after use and in between sessions by the staff. The windows in the playroom were opened to ventilate the room in between the sessions.

Cleaning schedules with information on cleaning processes were available and records of cleaning were kept by the staff.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that none of the children attending required medication to be administered to them while in the service. The staff were aware of correct procedures for administering and storing medicines in the service in accordance with the service's policy.

Fire Safety:

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

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1) A designated member of staff checked each child in and out of the service during the inspection and recorded the details on attendance sheets.
- (3) (a) There was a visitor record book in the hallway of the service. The visitor record book showed that the staff approved the entry to the service of any person other than a preschool child attending the service, person dropping off a preschool child, employee or unpaid worker. The record book contained dated records of the entry of visitors to the service.
- (4) Dated records of visitors to the service from the previous year were available for review in 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

- (2)
- (a) An adequately equipped and labelled first aid box was safely stored in an easily identifiable location the playroom.
 - (b) The first aid equipment was available at all times during the inspection if a child required first aid treatment.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) None of the staff in the service held the required up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training course at the time of the inspection. It is acknowledged that evidence was available to show that one staff member was enrolled to renew their First Aid Responder (FAR) training course for later in October 2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in writing that:

- (1)
- Corrective and Preventive Action**
- One of the staff members was registered on a First Aid Response (FAR) course the week following the inspection (11, 12 and 14 October 2024) and completed the training. A second staff member has been enrolled on FAR training in early December 2024.
- An arranged first aid course had been cancelled previously and the next available one was for the 11, 12 and 14 October 2024). In future the registered provider will have sourced more courses.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of FAR certificate for staff member and copy of enrolment confirmation for FAR training for a second staff member.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted to the Inspectorate has been reviewed and deemed to have addressed the non-compliance found on inspection. under Regulation 25.

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.*
- (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 9 September 2024.
- (b) Records were available of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in February 2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed 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 insurance for sessional service provision in place for a maximum of 22 children per session 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. There was evidence of water damage and black discoloration in a corner of the playroom ceiling. The area required to be maintained/repaired.
2. The water that flowed from the warm water taps in the sanitary units was cold and ranged from 13.4°C-13.9°C. The staff informed the inspector that the water heating boiler was broken and needed repairing.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

(d)

The registered provider advised in writing that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The service made immediate contact with a builder to come and assess the damage and to provide a work plan. It was agreed that repair work would be carried out during the midterm break. Hopefully this will not be a problem in the future as the tiles and ridge tiles have been replaced.
2. The registered provider made immediate contact with the plumber to come and install a boiler as arranged previously. The service will have the plumber to check the boiler on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs and copies of receipts/invoices for works completed by tradesmen.

Summary Comment

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