

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO117
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Name of Service:	The Haven Community Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Barnaderg, Ballina, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F26 KD52
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Name of Registered Provider:	Padraig Moore
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	42	PM	36
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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 and L Costello
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

The Haven Community Childcare Centre is a community service registered to provide full day, part time and sessional services to children aged from 0 to 6 years of age in a residential area of Ballina, Co Mayo. The service opens from 7:45 to 18:15 hours with sessional services provided from 9:15 to 12:15 hours. Registered school age services are also provided by the service. The premises is a two-storey building, purpose built for the provision of childcare services. There are five playrooms, one of which is located on the first floor of the building. Dedicated sleep areas are provided in two of the playrooms. There is a reception area, kitchen, staff room/kitchenette, office and sanitary facilities. There are five separate enclosed outdoor play areas available including a courtyard area in the centre of the building.

Staffing

There were 22 staff working in the service including the manager, childcare staff, administrative staff, catering and cleaning staff. 4 staff were employed under the Access and Inclusion Model scheme, and some staff were employed under employment schemes. 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.

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 inspectors wish 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) The service manager was the named designated person in charge in the service and there were three named staff members to deputise as required in her absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of the unannounced inspection. A sample review of records found that the designated person in charge or deputies were available at all times during opening hours in the service.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that five new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. Five of these new staff members may work directly with the children. A total of five files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for four staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review. The following information was available:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers, in particular the most recent employer for five adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 22 adults. 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 documentation was not required as none of the adults had lived outside of the State for periods longer than six consecutive months as adults.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available for all staff who worked directly with the preschool 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.*
- (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 15 adults working directly with 40 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service and an additional 2 children arrived at 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.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of 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:
- Alevins playroom: 2 adults cared for 2 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.
- Toddler playroom: 3 adults cared for 6 children aged 2 to 3 years of age.
- Little Frys playroom: 3 adults cared for between 4 children aged 1 to 2 years of age and 4 children aged 2 to 3 years.
- Busy Parris playroom: 3 adults cared for 15 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age during the morning and 12 children in the afternoon.
- Smolts playroom: 4 adults cared for 12 children aged from 3 years to 5 years of age. In the afternoon 2 adults cared for 9 children.
- (8) (a) The registered provider 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)

There were five playrooms in use in the service named the Alevins, Toddlers, Little Frys, Busy Parrs and Smolts playroom and each playroom catered for a defined age range of children. The Alevins, Little Frys and Toddlers playrooms catered for the younger children. The playrooms were laid out so that toys and play equipment were easily accessible to children allowing them to choose the toys that they would like to play with and replace them after use. The wide range of toys and play equipment were age appropriate. Children were observed to enjoy free play and more structured group activities throughout the day. For example, the children in the Little Frys playroom enjoyed free play followed by a group painting activity and later in the day messy play at a low-level sensory table with rice cereal and plastic toys. In the Alevins playroom children enjoyed exploring and playing with items in treasure baskets that had been created by the staff and playing together with toys at a low table. Both the Alevin and Little Frys playrooms had low level climbing systems that children played on supervised by staff. Mirrors were in place on playroom walls and the children in the Alevin playroom were observed to look at themselves in them. There were birthday walls and family walls displays on the walls in the playroom helping to develop a sense of belonging for the children in the service. There were five outdoor play areas available to the children and used by different playrooms with children using them daily. During the inspection the children from the Little Frys playroom were observed to play in the courtyard area that was located in the centre of the building. Staff brought out toys including ride on toys, rocker toys, balls and prams that children were observed to play with happily. Children from the Smolts playroom had access to the outdoor area to the side of the property which was fully secure. A wooden climbing frame and slide provided opportunities for climbing. Ride on toys and tyres supported gross motor skill development. There was an enclosed area with a mud kitchen that allowed for imaginative play. Sensory tables with sand and water were also provided outdoors. The Busy Pars playroom had direct access to an outdoor area which had numerous climbing frames and tyres promoting risky play. The children were eager to show the planter boxes with fresh spouting's of flowers which demonstrated a connection to nature. A shed stocked with ride on toys, tractors and balance bikes was available to the children.

The service provided the food eaten by the children in line with the service's healthy eating policy. On the day children ate a morning snack of bananas and toast. At dinnertime, children in the Alevins playroom were observed to eat a warm healthy meal prepared in the service of mashed potato, turnip and bacon. The meals were served to the children in their respective playrooms and eaten sitting in groups together at tables supervised by the staff members. Each child had an individual drink container available at low levels to them to have a drink if they were thirsty at any stage.

The children's nappies were changed regularly dependent on children's needs. Staff were observed to talk to the children during the process and let them know what was happening.

Sleep times were child-led and in response to children's needs. The Little Frys and Alevins playrooms had separate sleep areas located off them with cots used for children under two years of age and stackable beds available for older children. Linen and cellular blankets were provided and laundered by the service.

Children were supported and encouraged to be independent for example the younger children in the Alevins playroom were encouraged to feed themselves at dinnertime.

Interactions between staff and children were observed to be warm and positive in all the playrooms with staff observed to be familiar with the children showing knowledge of the children's likes and dislikes. The staff chatted with the children and encouraged conversations between the children. Behaviour was managed in a positive manner with staff role modelling positive behaviour. The inspectors were informed by staff that information was given to the parents of the younger children on a daily basis in relation to their eating and drinking, sleep, nappy changes and activities.

The staff had developed individual portfolios/scrapbooks for each child with samples viewed by the inspectors. The individual books held items such as photographs of the children engaging in various activities and examples of their artwork. The staff informed the inspectors that photographs of children's group activities were put on the walls of the halls to help keep parents updated of the activities their children were taking part in. Regular newsletters with service information were developed by the staff and made available to parents to update them. The service had recently celebrated Christmas with a visit from Santa Claus to the service. Evidence of planning including short-term, medium and long term plans was on display on a notice board in the Alevins 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 doors to both buildings were secured on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. The staff controlled the access of people to and from the building ensuring that no children left the service unnoticed, and that people did not enter without authorisation. The outdoor areas were enclosed and gates secured when the children were playing outdoors to prevent children from leaving the areas unnoticed. Blind cords on windows had mechanisms in place to secure blind cords. Windows had been risk assessed by staff with restrictors in place for example on windows opening out from a hallway to the courtyard play area and the Little Frys playroom windows. Stairways were well lit with appropriately positioned handrails in place. Internal doors had securing mechanism in place to restrict access by children for example the highly positioned door handle leading into the Toddler playroom. Toys and play equipment used by the children during the inspection were observed to be age appropriate and suitable for use under adult supervision.

Infection Control:

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. Children's soothers were stored in individual plastic containers in the Alevins playroom. Aprons and gloves were provided for nappy changing and observed to be worn by staff when changing children's nappies. There was an emphasis on handwashing at key moments for example before eating, after outdoor and messy play and following nappy changes. Foot pedal operated bins were provided and observed to be used by staff for waste disposal in the service. There was separate storage systems used to store the children's individual personal items. Cot and bed linen was laundered regularly in the service.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspectors that none of the children needed to receive medication whilst in the service. The staff showed awareness of the safe procedures in relation to administration and storage of medication should it be required to be administered to a child whilst in the service.

Safe Sleep:

The Alevins and Little Frys playrooms both had sleep areas with cots located off the playrooms separated from the playrooms by safety gates. Children under two years of age slept in standard cots in the service. The inspectors were informed by staff that a staff member was always present in the playrooms when children were sleeping. The staff observed resting/sleeping children at 10-minute intervals and kept written records including information on the children's colour, position and breathing patterns. The room air temperatures on the day were recorded as ranging from 18.5°C to 18.8°C which is within the recommended safe sleep temperatures. A protocol for children sharing cots at different times had been developed including cleaning of cots between use and record keeping of cot sharing and was displayed on the walls of both sleep areas in addition to guidance on safe sleep practices.

Fire Safety:

The inspectors observed that the emergency exits and routes were free from obstruction during the inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measure

- (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 records of the fire drills kept by the staff. A fire drill was carried out during the inspection as part of smoke and fire alarm testing and maintenance on the 13 January 2026. The children were observed to be comfortable and familiar with the fire drill process.
 - (b) The service kept a record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarm system. The records showed that the firefighting equipment was last maintained on the 14 November 2025. The smoke alarm system was maintained during the inspection on the 13 January 2026.
- (2)

(c) The records were made available to the inspectors by the deputy designated person in charge on request.

(4)

Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire including clear maps of emergency exit routes were conspicuously displayed throughout the service.

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 supervised by the staff at all times during the inspection. At dinnertime in the Alevins playroom, the staff were observed to sit beside the children, chatting with them while supervising them closely and supporting them to feed themselves. When playing outside in the enclosed outdoor areas, the staff moved around allowing them to keep the children in their line of vision.

Staff stayed in the rooms where children were sleeping to supervise them and kept 10-minute observation records of the sleeping/resting children.

The children in the Smolts playroom were supervised using the stairs when accessing the outdoor areas. Staff members positioned themselves to the front, middle and back of line, prompting children to hold the stair rail and climb up and down the stairs independently.

The older children used the toilets by themselves when they needed to but were within earshot of staff members if they needed any help.