

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY042		
Name of Service:	Ballycommon Community Childcare Initiative		
Address of Service:	Kilmurry Cross, Ballycommon, Co. Offaly		
Eircode:	R35 X622		
Name of Registered Provider:	Yvonne McDonald		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	05/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM NA
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath		
Inspection undertaken by:	C.O' Connor Hughes		
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

An Early Education and Care programme is provided from 09:00 to 12:00 on a Monday to Friday basis to children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The Early Years' Service is located in a prefabricated building on the grounds of the old primary school in Ballycommon, Co. Offaly. The service consists of a playroom and office. An outdoor play area is attached to the side of the premises. Onsite car parking facilities are available to the front of the service.

Staffing

The designated person in charge and a staff member were working directly with children on the 5 February 2025. A relief staff member is available if required. The registered provider does not work with children and was not present 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/ premises and facilities. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, the staff member 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 designated person was available in the service.

(b)

The designated person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.

Four staff files were inspected including the registered provider.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

Two written validated references were available in respect of the staff members from previous employers and from sources other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the registered provider and three staff members.

In respect of the registered provider the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

In respect of three staff members 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)

Police vetting was not required as the registered provider or staff members had not lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)
The registered provider had ensured that each staff member was vetted prior to commencing employment in the service.

(4)
The registered provider and staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)
The ratio of adults to children was adequate during the inspection.

(3)
There were eleven children attending the service supervised directly by the designated person in charge and a staff member.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)
In a review of fifteen child enrolment records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of children attending the service.

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;*
- (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.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

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 observed to enjoy the various play activities that included creative, sensory and free play during the morning session. Children were encouraged to be independent as they dressed in their outdoor protective wear prior to going to the outdoor play area. The children moved freely between the indoor and outdoor play area.

A healthy snack was provided by parents that consisted of sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts with water to drink. Children were given time to eat and enjoy their lunch.

A key person system was in place in the service. Staff were positive towards children using the child's individual name and maintaining eye contact during interactions. Each child was given an opportunity to sing a song and staff praised each child on their efforts. Staff sat with children during small group work and story time. Seamless transitions were observed as staff used a timer to indicate change to the next activity.

Partnership with parents was noted. The service sends updates and information to parents in an electronic format. One to one telephone calls as needed. The children's scrapbook depicting the child's play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

The pre-school room was laid out with low level tables and chairs. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were available to children on low level shelving. A home area, a dolls house, a rest area and puppet theatre were available for children's use. Children's artwork and birthdays were displayed.

The outdoor play area which was located adjacent to the pre-school room consisted of an artificial grass surface area and was equipped with a playhouse, post office, water funnels, tyres and a climbing frame. A sheltered outdoor play area was erected since the last inspection on the 11 October 2022.

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 service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival.

Infection Control:

The premises was visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning records were available and reviewed. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature.

Fire Safety:

The fire escape routes were unobstructed from the pre-school room.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The most recent Garda vetting disclosure presented in respect of three staff members was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

2023 disclosures submitted to the clearing agency were not in the staff members files and could not be located. The service has now submitted an application to the Garda National Bureau to obtain a vetting number for the service as per the new protocols. As soon as this number is received by the service all staff garda vetting will be updated and reviewed.

To ensure that this oversight does not occur all garda vetting will now be renewed on an annual basis in September of each year-when staff return following the summer break. Copies of all the disclosures will be

personally put into staff files by the deputy manager and additional copies kept by the manager in the administration files.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Already submitted copy of application to the Garda vetting Bureau dated 07/02/2025.

Attached copy of reviewed staff recruitment policy.

Summary Comment

The corrective actions stated by the registered provider will address the non-compliance when the Garda vetting is received. The updated Garda Vetting procedures will be submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate on receipt.

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)
The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)(b)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by a staff member.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of 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)

The designated person in charge and a staff member were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was located in the pre-school room.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 30 January 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in conspicuous position in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

There was no up to date maintenance record to indicate that the smoke alarms and firefighting equipment were operational and maintained in the service. The most recent record was dated November 2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The fire service company were contacted on the 08/02/2025 and servicing and testing of the fire detection and alarm system was carried out in the service on the 10/02/2025.

Testing on the fire extinguishers and smoke alarm is carried out annually in the service by the company. On this occasion there was a misunderstanding regarding the renewal date for retesting. The childcare service has been in contact with the company who have agreed to pre-arrange annual date for re testing of the extinguishers and smoke alarms.

Supporting documentation submitted

Maintenance records for fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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

Children were supervised by the designated person in charge and staff member in the pre-school room, while playing in the outdoor play area and using the toilet.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 15 September 2025.