

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY065
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Name of Service:	Early Years Childcare
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Address of Service:	Aras An Chontae, Charleville Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 F893
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Coughlan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	17/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	24
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35K1W4
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Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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

Early Years Childcare is privately operated service and offers full day care, part time and sessional care and education to children aged 0-6 years old. Children currently enrolled range between the ages 1 – 6 years old. Opening hours are from 08:30am-17:30pm, Monday-Friday. The service operates from a single storey purpose-built premises located on the grounds of the Offaly County Council Offices, in the town of Tullamore, Co. Offaly. The premises consists of one large preschool room divided into two, a breakout space, a creche room, a sleep room, kitchen and office. An enclosed secure outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises which is accessed directly from the service or the side of the property. Car parking and set down is available to the public carpark at the front of the property.

Staffing

The registered employer employs nine staff members to work in the service, consisting of eight childcare staff and one kitchen staff member. Eight staff were present on the day of inspection, including the registered provider, the deputy person in charge, a staff member in the kitchen and five childcare staff. The registered provider works in the service directly with the children and was present on the day of 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) – Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1)(2)(8) – Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid
- Regulation 26(1) (a) (b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures
- Regulation 28 – Insurance

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, deputy 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 had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The registered provider and the deputy person in charge were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

Ten staff files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted;

(2) (a)

Sixteen written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

Four written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

- (c)
A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of nine staff members and the registered provider. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)
Police vetting was available for two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.
- (4)
The eight staff members and registered provider working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 8 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.*
- (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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. On arrival at the service, there were thirty children being supervised directly by seven childcare staff.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

Morning

- There were three adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 1 year and 9 months – 3 years in the Creche group.
- There were two adults providing direct care to twenty children aged between 3-6 years in the Preschool group.

Afternoon

- There were four adults providing direct care to twenty-four children aged between 1 year and 9 months – 6 years.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

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)

All meals were provided by the service and prepared onsite by a cook. On arrival at the service, children were sitting together eating pancakes celebrating pancake Tuesday. Children were offered a choice of toppings such as maple syrup, chocolate spread, fresh fruit and marshmallows. The hot meal on the day of inspection was mashed potato, fish fingers, peas and carrots. Children sat at low tables eating together, staff also sat with the children, engaging in conversation. Drinks of milk and water were provided by the service and children's individual drink bottles were accessible in the preschool room throughout the day.

Sanitary accommodation was available directly off the preschool room and children accessed the toilet independently during the inspection, supervision was provided as necessary. Adequate nappy changing facilities were available. Nappy changing procedures were carried out on a routine basis and more frequently if required. Children were observed to wash their hands after outdoor play, after using the bathroom and before snacks.

Cots and low-level beds with appropriate bed linen were available for children who required a sleep. Children from the Creche group and some children from the preschool group who required a sleep were facilitated to have a sleep after lunchtime.

Supporting relationships around children

Staff working with the children were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were observed being held and cuddled by staff and any child that became upset or unsettled was immediately attended to and reassured. The children were observed to be familiar and confident in their environment.

Family photographs and birthday walls with the children's photographs were displayed in the preschool room at child level, helping the children feel connected to home. Each child's photograph was positioned above designated low-level hooks for their coats and bags. Learning journals were maintained for each child, documenting their individual learning and development over the course of the year.

Communication with parents regarding the children's day to day learning and activities were provided at drop off and collection times. Additional updates were provided via an online messaging application.

Physical and material environment

Each room was equipped with space to play, learn and develop with age-appropriate play and learning materials to encourage each child to initiate self-directed activities. The main large preschool room was spacious and laid out to facilitate free movement with various interest areas throughout. A dress up rail, kitchen area with play equipment and open shelving with a variety of materials, provided opportunity for free play and exploration. Children were observed engaged in a fine motor activity with play dough. The children used shape cutters and rollers to make shapes, other children used a tuff tray with coloured rice, buckets and utensils to scoop rice. Children sat on the soft rug building towers with magnetic tiles. Children were observed sitting at tables with staff participating in colouring and drawing activities.

Other equipment included musical instruments, a blackboard, easel, dolls and prams, trucks and cars, and a variety of jigsaws and puzzles. Arts and crafts materials were freely available to the children on low shelves, including paper, colours, tinfoil and paper plates for creating.

Children were observed to engage in a class activity of musical chairs and dancing to music played by staff.

A rest area had a couch for reading and resting throughout the session. Noise cancelling headphones were available for any children with any sensory needs.

Younger children in the creche room enjoyed playing with push along toys, as well as toy buggies with dolls and a trolley.

An enclosed outdoor area provided an opportunity for outdoor play. The outdoor area was accessible from the main preschool room via a patio door. Equipment included a climbing frame, a sand tray, balls, ride on equipment, tables and stools. Part of the outdoor area was sectioned off with portable low fencing and had a mini climbing frame with a slide, ride on tractor and car, and rocking equipment for the younger group of children. Wall mounted blackboards were positioned at child level. Two open roofed areas in the outdoor space allowed for play during all weather conditions. Children were dressed appropriately for the weather, wearing coats and hats.

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 glass entrance door to the service was secure and managed by the staff within. This prevented children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and unauthorised access to the service. A doorbell alerted staff to any visitors.

Cleaning products were stored safely in the kitchen and on high shelves out of reach of children.

The door to the kitchen was observed to be closed during the inspection and was inaccessible to the children.

The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured by a wooden fence, concrete wall and gate. Protective bumpers were in place on the poles in the outdoor play area providing protection against injury should a child run into the pole during outdoor play.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from wall mounted dispensers. Pedal bins were available in the preschool rooms and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation. The preschool rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in a wall mounted first aid box. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Staff

were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child. The registered provider informed the inspector that no child attending the service was on specific medication.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. A designated sleep room provided six cots and six low level beds for children who required a sleep. Sleeping children were physically monitored at 10-minute intervals by the registered provider. A record of the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children was noted in sleep logs. The sleep room temperature was recorded at 19.7 ° Celsius.

Fire Safety:

Fire exits were clearly identified and unobstructed in each pre-school room. A fire assembly point was located to the side 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)
Three staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR). A FAR qualified staff member was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service as per the staff roster.

(2)(a)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located throughout the service.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to 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 last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 28 January 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment were serviced in May 2025. The smoke detection system was serviced on 31 October 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

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 thirty-six children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.