

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO019
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Name of Service:	Hopes & Dreams
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Address of Service:	29 Cartron Heights, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 AV24
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Casey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/08/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	21
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen
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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	Non-applicable
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Description of service

Hopes and Dreams is a privately operated full day care service established in 1999, located within a residential estate in Sligo town. The service operates from an adapted two-storey dwelling. The ground floor comprises two care rooms: one large room catering for pre-school children aged 2 years 8 months to 4 years, and a second room for younger children aged 2 years to 2 years 6 months. The first floor accommodates office space, a kitchen, and staff facilities. Outdoor play areas are provided at both the front and rear of the premises, each secured by fencing and gates.

Staffing

The service employs seven adults in total. On the day of the inspection, there were five staff actively engaged in providing direct care to 18 children. The Person in Charge also worked directly with the children. The registered provider, who does not work in the service on a daily basis, 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 announced/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 registered provider, 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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)

The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2)

On the day of inspection, six adults were present, the register provider, person in charge and four adults who were employed to work directly with the children.

The following vetting information was available for seven adults:

- (a) Twelve written validated references from past employers for seven of the adults.
- (b) Two additional written validated references from reputable sources, relating to two of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all seven staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4) Seven of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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)
On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.
- (8)
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 review of attendance records.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

Compliance Information

- The preschool room was a bright welcoming and spacious environment with a range of appropriate learning materials for children. The premises included two well-equipped rooms that were appropriately furnished to support both rest and play activities.
- Each room was designed to meet the developmental needs of the children, offering quiet, comfortable areas for rest as well as a variety of age-appropriate resources to encourage imaginative and physical play.
- Each care room had a soft matting area, that the children could access as they chose for reading, play or quiet time. A supply of stackable beds was available for any children who required sleep during the day, and one child over the age of two was observed sleeping during the inspection.
- Children had daily access to a secure and well-maintained outdoor play area, which supported a broad range of play experiences promoting physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.
- Outdoor play was intentionally integrated into the daily routine. The outdoor area included, slides, ride on bikes. Basketball net and ball.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- On the day of inspection, the two indoor rooms were well-equipped with a wide range of age-appropriate resources that supported the care, learning, and development of the children. Materials were varied, inclusive, and reflective of the children's interests and developmental stages.
- Equipment was clean, safe, and well-maintained, with staff ensuring regular checks were carried out. The rooms featured open shelving units that allowed children to independently access materials, and the walls were decorated with children's artwork, contributing to a warm and child-centred environment.
- A large family tree display included photographs of the children and their families, promoting a sense of belonging. Paint supplies, messy play aprons, and paintbrushes were available to support creative expression. Children were observed engaging in both structured and self-directed play.
- The outdoor environment was also well-resourced across two distinct areas. Outdoor Area One included small tables and chairs, scooters, ride-on bikes, and small trucks, supporting active and social play.

- Outdoor Area Two featured artificial grass, a covered sandpit, a mud kitchen, a growing area for vegetables and flowers, small picnic tables and benches, a slide, a covered area with a tent, a child-sized barbecue, and small scooters.
- These outdoor spaces provided rich opportunities for exploration, creativity, and physical activity, and were integrated into the daily routine. The overall environment encouraged independence and supported the implementation of the curriculum.

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 was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- Waste was inaccessible to the children both indoors and outdoors.
- Childgates were present in the hallway leading to the stairwell to prevent children from accessing the staircase unsupervised.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- The outdoor area at the back of the premises was secured with tall wooden fencing and a bolted gate. The outdoor area to the front was secure with walls and bolted gates.
- Grapes were observed to be cut in half, reducing the risk of choking to the child.
- No Low hanging wires were accessible to in any of the rooms.
- Storage facilities were kept inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All toys and play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, were observed to be safe for the pre-school children using them and in a good state of repair.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided in the sanitary accommodation.

- There were one designated nappy changing areas with a clean intact changing mat. The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually boxed and labelled.
- Aprons and gloves were available and observed in use by staff when changing of a child was required.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- The tables were cleaned prior to snack time, with foods served to children on suitable plates.
- A refrigerator was available and utilised for the storage of perishable snacks and meals.
- Foot operated Pedal bins which were available in the pre-school room and sanitary area.
- Soap was readily available to children to wash their hands prior to eating, after both toileting and nappy changes. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.

Administration of Medication:

- When interviewed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises.

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

- On the day of inspection, children were appropriately always supervised by staff who were actively engaged and positioned to see and hear all children in their care.
- Constant, careful supervision by both sight and sound was observed throughout the day, including during outdoor play, toileting, playroom activities, and sleep time when children were resting on mats and beds. Supervision was responsive to the age and developmental needs of the children, with staff anticipating behaviours and providing support where needed.

- Transitions between activities, rest periods, and mealtimes were well-managed, ensuring children were never left unattended.
- Personal care routines were carried out in a manner that respected the child's privacy and dignity.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service is adequately insured for the period 28.03.2022 to 27.03.2024 to provide a full day care service to 30 children.