

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO023		
Name of Service:	Kilmacowen Pre-School & Playgroup		
Address of Service:	Kilmacowen, Ballisodare, Co. Sligo		
Eircode:	F91 RR58		
Name of Registered Provider:	Louise McHugh		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	06/06/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM N/A.
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello		
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

Kilmacowen Preschool and Playgroup is a community-based preschool that was founded in 1983. It is located in Kilmacowen, a townland 9km south of Sligo town and about 3km from Ballisodare village. The play-based service provides a morning sessional service from 9:15 to 12:15, Monday to Friday, for a maximum number of 22 children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The building is a conversion of the old Kilmacowen National School which was built in 1846. The setting is rural. There are two outdoor play areas, one to the front of the building and one to the rear of the premises. The children attending the service have two generous playroom spaces with children's sanitary facilities located off the entrance lobby.

Staffing

There were three adults employed in the service who all work directly with preschool children, this includes the person in charge and two childcare educators. The registered provider does not work 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,/ safety 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, 21, 23, 27 and 28. 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*
- (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) (a)

There was a person in charge and a person to deputise as required.

(b)

The person in charge remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

The governance structure in the service was clearly identifiable and all staff members were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) (a) (b)

Three adults are employed in the service and these files were the subject of review.

Six written and verified past employer references were available.

(c)

Garda vetting has been obtained for all three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(2) (d)

International police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for six consecutive months.

- (4) Three adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, 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.

(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)
There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were three adults working directly with 19 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection.

(3)
The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

1) (a-i)

Ten random sample records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year's inspector.

(4)

The person in charge is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain these records for a period of two years from the date in which the child attends the service.

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

The service consisted of two large playrooms that were used as one, with free flow between rooms. There were adequate and suitable indoor play facilities available in each room for the age range of children attending. The rooms presented as bright and visually appealing spaces with an orderly arrangement of play equipment and materials set into clearly defined areas of interest. These included arts and crafts, construction, small world items, dress up props, play kitchen areas, library's, sensory tables, relaxing areas, problem solving toys and wide range of manipulate play resources. Open low level shelving units enabled all items to be readily accessible to the children and suitable sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities and snack times.

The outdoor area is where the children spend most of their time and this area is equipped with a variety of resources. A Polly tunnel provides shelter and has a covered sand area to allow for children to access in all weathers. A library and rest area within the tunnel gives the children an opportunity to rest or opt out of an activity. A home corner resourced with a kitchen and props facilitates imaginative play. Outdoors a gravel area is used as a construction area for the children where they can dig and build with sit on diggers, spades and buckets. On the day the children explained to the inspector how they were fixing water leaks and demonstrated this with pipes and work tools which aided their imagination. Goal posts and foot balls on a grassed area supported gross motor skill development as well as ride on toys, tractors and bicycles.

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 into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- Gates leading to the service were secure with a lock, ensuring no unauthorised access to the outdoor area.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored in the kitchen out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Waste was inaccessible with pedal foot operated bins and outdoor bins out of reach of children.
- Head counts were observed to be completed throughout transitions from indoors to outdoors and to the bathrooms.

Infection Control:

- Warm water liquid soap and paper towels were available for safe hand hygiene practices.
- Children were observed to wash hands after outdoor play, after using the toilet and prior to snack times.
- Materials and resources were visibly cleaned with cleaning schedules in place.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors remained unobstructed on the day.
- Child friendly social stories on the evacuation route was clearly displayed on the walls of the care room.

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 in the service were observed to be supervised at all times. In the morning, the children played in the large outdoor area at the rear of the premises. There is one Polly tunnel resourced with toys and sand pits and children moved in and out of this area freely. One adult remained in this area to ensure all children were in view. In the open outdoor space, adults were observed to position themselves to ensure all areas were in view. Good communication was observed between the adults as demonstrated when adults left the area to go inside to support children using the bathroom, the adult remaining outdoors repositioned themselves to ensure all children were in sight.

Independence is promoted within the service and children were encouraged to use the bathroom and wash their hands independently. The adults could hear the children in the bathroom and stood close to the door to ensure support could be offered if required while maintaining the dignity and independence of the child.

At mealtimes, the adults sat alongside the children engaged in conversation and supervising the children eating and encouraging the children to be independent opening yoghurts and peeling fruit.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated they had adequate insurance with a certificate for 22 children in a sessional service up until the 27th of March 2026.