

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO057
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Name of Service:	St Molaise Preschool & Afterschool
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Address of Service:	Community Centre, Grange, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 DH92
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Devine, Louise Scanlon
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	29/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	13
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, Co Sligo.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell
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
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Description of service

St Molaise Preschool & Afterschool is a privately owned and operated full day care service in Grange, Co Sligo. The service is registered to cater for children aged from 2 to 6 years and operates from 8:00 to 18:15 hours. Sessional services are provided from 9:30-12:30 hours. School aged services are also provided. The service operates in a converted building previously used as a primary school building with two care-rooms, sanitary accommodation, a kitchenette and office. Outdoor play areas are provided to the rear, side and front of the building.

Staffing

There are nine childcare staff in the service including the two registered providers who worked directly with the children.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23 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 registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

- (2) Discussion with the designated person in charge and review of records found that there were nine staff in the service at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documentation was available for the staff:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for seven staff. One written validated reference from their most recent employers for two staff members.
 - (b) One written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for one staff.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all nine staff. 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 documents were available for two staff members who had lived outside of the State for longer than six months as adults.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the seven staff who worked directly with the preschool children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a) A second written validated reference from a past employer was required for one staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2) (a) A new written reference has been obtained from the staff members past employer and has been verified by a registered provider. More stringent practices have been put in place for obtaining and verifying references following review.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the new written, validated reference.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered providers has been reviewed by the Inspectorate and been found to have addressed the non-compliance found under Regulation 9 on inspection.

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 an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on the day of the unannounced inspection. 4 staff were working directly with the 28 preschool children present on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. In the afternoon, following sessional services, the Seomra Ríra catered for school aged children only. Children from the Seomra Ríra joined the preschool children in the Seomra Ruaille Buaille where 2 to 3 staff cared for a total of 13 children in the afternoon.
- (2) On the day of the inspection the registered providers ensured that the relevant minimum adult to children ratios were adhered to in the service. Attendance records showing that these ratios were always adhered to during the times sampled for review.
- (8) (a) Discussion with staff and review of the attendance records found that there were at least two adults on the premises when children were present.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) (a) to (i)

The inspector reviewed a random sample of ten children’s records across children attending both care-rooms. The records were found to be compliant during the inspection.

(3) (c)

The required information was made readily available for inspection to the inspector in the service by one of the registered providers on request.

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) A breakfast of cereal and toast was provided for children on the day and eaten in the Seomra Ruaille Buaille. During the morning a rolling snack system was observed to be operated in Seomra Ríra. Each child had a small disc containing their photograph that was displayed on a care-room wall. Their disc was removed from wall display by each child before getting their food out of the fridge. The disc was placed in a container when they had finished eating so that staff members were aware of who had eaten their snacks. The children who had not yet eaten their food towards the end of the session were reminded by the staff to eat their snacks. At lunchtime, the children who attended full day care services in the Seomra Ruaille Buaille were provided with platters of brown bread, cheese, chopped peppers and tomatoes that were placed on tables. The children were encouraged to serve themselves, closely supervised by the staff members.

The service provided a warm meal supplied by outside caterers and there was a rolling three-week menu that was given to the parents. A main meal of beef casserole and mashed potatoes was scheduled for the day of the inspection. Water stations were set up by staff so that the children could access their individual drink containers when they were thirsty.

The staff informed the inspector that at present none of the children who were all aged over two years needed naps when in the service. There were sleep mats available in the service should they be needed and the staff described how one area of the Seomra Ruaille Buaille was to be set up if children wanted to sleep.

Children who were toilet trained were supported and encouraged by staff to use the toilet when they needed to. Staff changed nappies for children in response to individual children's needs.

Staff prompted children to wash their hands for example before eating and after using the toilet. Boxes of tissues were available in the care-rooms for children to clean their noses with. The staff supported the children to be as independent as possible for example putting on their own wellington boots and outdoor clothes for playing outdoors. The children were prompted and encouraged to store away toys that they had been playing with when it was time to tidy up before outside play.

The staff interactions with the children were positive and warm with staff members using some Irish words and phrases when speaking with the children. One child who cried during a minor disagreement with another child about seating arrangements was comforted by a staff member. The staff member spoke gently with both children and helped them to find a solution to the issue. Circle times were used to encourage children to speak and as a recap at the end of the session in the Seomra Ríra for the children to talk about how they had played and what they had learned that day. There was key worker system in place in place with parents aware of their child’s keyworkers. Children were observed to pick up and look at individual framed photographs of themselves and their families in both care-rooms during the day. Each care-room had a birthday wall with information on the children’s birthdays supporting a sense of belonging in the service. Staff members greeted parents/guardians warmly at collection time and provided brief information to them on their child’s day in the service. An electronic application was used to record observations made by staff of the children’s activities and progress and shared with parents. The service had a focus on supporting the upcoming transition for some of the older children to primary school. A school transitions booklet with photographs of the new school had been made by staff to ease the transition by creating familiarity and one of the children handed it to the inspector to view. The child was very excited about showing the book and pointed out photographs of their new uniform and interior of the primary school. The staff informed the inspector that a graduation ceremony was to be recorded in the service and planned to be sent to parents and families to watch at home with the children. The toys and play equipment were displayed at low levels to allow children to choose the toys and equipment that they wanted to play with. An art area in the Seomra Ríra was set up with paper and paint and a child was observed to pick up a paint brush and start painting a picture. Both care-rooms had similar play equipment with well-equipped home corners, construction and transport toys, tabletop activities and art supplies available to the children. Groups of children were observed to play with farm animals and machines making a “farm” under a table in a care-room. Children played with jigsaws and puzzles and some worked together in teams playing with small, coloured plastic bricks while talking to each other and discussing what structures they would build. The staff involved themselves in children’s play for example discussing with the children how fast toy cars could travel. Children moved freely around the care-rooms playing with different toys and equipment. The staff and children in the Seomra Ríra were observed to spend time playing outdoors in the outdoor play area to the front and side of the building. The staff played action and running games with the children supervising them closely. Some children were observed to play at a small fairy garden while others played with ride on

toys. The second large outdoor play area at the rear of the building was not used during the inspection. The staff showed the inspector planter containers of herbs that the children had planted with staff and children from a service in a nearby village. The two services had joined together on several prearranged dates during the year as part of a project that facilitated knowledge sharing and link development between the services.

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 gate to the outdoor area was secured on the inspector's unannounced arrival with a bell system in place to alert staff. The inspector was admitted by one of the registered providers following production of identification details. The entrance doors to the service were secured during the inspection preventing children from leaving unnoticed and people from entering without authorisation by staff members. There were safety gates in place at entrances to the kitchenette in the hallway restricting access to the area by children. Toys and play equipment were found to be in good condition and suitable for the developmental stages of the children using them on the day. Cleaning products were stored safely out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

The staff cleaned down surfaces after use such as tables when the children had finished eating at them. Cleaning schedules were on display in areas of the service with cleaning checklist records kept daily by staff. Foot pedal operated bins were provided and used for waste disposal. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided and used for handwashing and drying by the staff and children.

Administration of Medication:

No child received medication during the inspection. The service had a policy in place regarding the administration of medication and the staff showed awareness of the contents of the policy including the procedure for storing medication during discussion with the inspector.

Safe Sleep:

None of the children who were all aged over two years needed to sleep in the service during the inspection. The staff showed an awareness of safe sleep procedures during discussion with the inspector including carrying out observations of sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exit routes were observed to be unobstructed during the inspection.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance in place to cover the maximum of 39 children registered in the service at any one time with an expiry date of the 27 March 2026.