

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY019
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Name of Service:	Clareen Country Creche
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Address of Service:	Clareen, Kilcolman, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 YX08
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Name of Registered Provider:	Una Merry
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/08/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	49
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Civic offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney and N McEndoo
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

This full day care service was established in 2003 to provide care and education to children aged 0 – 6 years. The service operates Monday – Friday, 7.30am – 6pm for 48 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from purpose-built premises in a rural area outside the town of Nenagh in north Tipperary. The premises is a detached, dormer style building with five activity rooms, kitchen, sleep rooms and sanitary accommodation areas downstairs and two activity rooms, staff room, office and sanitary accommodation areas upstairs.

The service has a large outdoor play area at the back of the premises to which the children have daily access.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service on a daily basis and provides cover in the rooms when required.

There are 16 staff employed in the service and 11 staff were present on the day of inspection. There was also a childcare student on work experience present in the service 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(8), 20, 21, 22, 24(1), 25, 26(1)(4) and 28.

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 inspectors wish 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

The staff files of six staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process. This represented three staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 8 April 2021 and three staff whose staff files had not been reviewed on previous inspections.

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of four members of staff.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of two members of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant records were maintained on file. Garda vetting had been renewed for staff after three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required by any of the staff as they had not lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months.

(4) Staff who worked directly with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6, 7 or 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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 were 10 staff, including the registered provider and assistant manager, available to work directly with 51 children aged between 1 and 5 years old. The registered provider and assistant manager provided relief in the rooms throughout the day to ensure there were sufficient staff in each room especially at times such as nappy changing, mealtimes and to cover staff breaks. The chef and a student on work experience were also present in the service but not included in the adult/child ratios.

The children were cared for across five activity rooms with three rooms downstairs and two upstairs as follows:

- Baby room: 5 children aged 14 – 18 months with 2 staff,
- Toddler room: 10 children aged 1 – 2 years with 2 staff,
- Playschool room 1: 8 children aged 2.5 – 3 years and 1 child aged 3 years with 2 staff,
- Playschool rooms 3 and 4: 27 children aged 3 – 5 years with 4 staff.

(2) The adult/child ratio was maintained within the recommended ratios throughout the day.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service while it was in operation.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service was carried out over two floors with younger children accommodated downstairs and older children accommodated upstairs. There were five activity rooms/spaces downstairs, of which three were in use on the day of inspection. The two activity rooms upstairs were both in use on the day of inspection.

Each of the rooms was bright, spacious, well laid out and well resourced. The children enjoyed a change of environment during the day with a balance between indoor and outdoor play.

(b) The children had access to rest spaces in each room as well as to separate sleep rooms for younger children. There were two sleep rooms near the Baby and Toddler rooms equipped with 5 and 6 standard cots respectively. Cots were equipped with fitted mattresses and individual bed linens for each child. The sleep rooms had openable windows to ensure adequate ventilation and the windows were fitted with blackout blinds to dim the natural light to encourage restful sleep during the day.

Each room had a cosy area or 'calm corner' with vinyl floor mats and soft seating where the children could relax away from the general play area.

(3)(a) The children had daily access to the extensive outdoor play area at the rear of the premises. This area had been developed into several distinct spaces which included: a large, covered area which was enclosed by fencing and had a soft fall surface; a swing area; a hill, tunnel and playhouse area; a messy play shed; a hill climb and slide area and natural grove areas. There was a separate sheltered outdoor area for the younger children directly accessible from the Baby room.

There was a water trough and taps along one wall where the children could wash their hands after outdoor play or get access to water for their play activities.

The ground surfaces in the outdoor area included gravel, bark mulch, grass, artificial grass and soft fall matting. The covered play area was used by a small group of children, approximately 10 – 12, at any one time to ensure that the children could freely use the equipment and resources available without risk of running into each other. Staff were observed to be vigilant in their supervision of this area and of all the outdoor spaces. The covered area had a hammock that the children liked to swing in, with adult supervision and time management, tumble wheel, peanut roll, ride-on vehicles, hoppers, scooters, soft play areas, home corner/shop area, pop-up tent area and construction area.

In the area outside of the covered play space children were observed making cubbies in the tunnel and in the groves of trees, making mud pies, climbing, sliding, swinging and engaging in imaginative play.

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 rooms were well equipped with furniture, toys, materials and resources. The furniture in each room was suitable to the age and stage of development of the children who used the room, for example highchairs were available in the baby room for use at mealtimes. Standard sized seating was also available in each room for use by staff. A range of furniture was available such as sturdy tables and chairs for dining and tabletop activities and soft seating for relaxation areas.

The toys were displayed on open shelving units or in specific purpose units such as the dressing up rails or home corner cabinets. The layout of the rooms ensured that all materials were easy for the children to see and access independently.

Storage areas were available for toys and equipment that were not currently in use and to allow for rotation of materials.

The outdoor areas were well resourced with a range of activities that were different to the indoor experiences and included equipment for swinging, sliding, climbing, tumbling, digging, building, riding on, pushing and imaginative play in nature.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy. The service had a member of staff whose sole role was the planning, preparation, cooking and serving of food. Any food allergies or food intolerances were catered for. All of the food and drink consumed by the children was supplied by the service. Children were offered milk or water to drink with every meal and there was water available in each room throughout the day so that the children could have a drink when they needed one. The younger children had individual drinking bottles or lidded cups that were refilled with water when empty and left in an accessible place in each room.

A list of the range of foods offered to the children was displayed on the glass panel beside the front door. The menu was varied and changed weekly depending on the children’s preferences. Snacks such as rice cakes and crackers were available in the cupboards in each room if a child was hungry between meals. On the day of inspection the morning snack was served between 10.30 and 10.45am and consisted of cheese and grapes with milk or water.

Dinner was served between 12 and 12.30pm and consisted of roast chicken, carrots, mashed potatoes and gravy. The children were offered a generous portion, with equal amounts of meat, mash and vegetables and a choice of whether they wanted gravy or not. A second portion was available for children who were hungry.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The children were checked in and out of the service by a member of staff from their room. Written records were maintained of the children’s attendance.

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) There were ten staff employed in the service who held current certification in first aid response (FAR).

(2)(a) First aid boxes were available on both floors and easily accessible in the corridor area if required. There was also a wall mounted first aid cabinet in each room.

(b) First aid supplies were readily available if required by a child attending the 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 firefighting 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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service throughout the year.

(b) There was a written record, maintained in the fire register, of the number, type and annual serving of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in each room of the service.

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 for up to 80 children attending at any one time, valid until 27 March 2024.