

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:	11/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	66	PM	45
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary E45A099
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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	N/A
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Description of service

This full day care service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years old. The service operates Monday – Friday, 7.30am – 6pm for 48 weeks of the year. This includes a daily 3-hour session, funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children, that operates 9am – 12pm, for 38 weeks of the year, in line with the school calendar.

The service is operated from a purpose-built, detached, dormer premises in a rural area near the town of Nenagh in North Tipperary. The rooms upstairs include: two activity rooms, staff room, office and sanitary accommodation areas. The rooms downstairs include: four activity rooms (two Toddler rooms opened up to act as one room and two ECCE rooms), a sleep room, kitchen and sanitary accommodation areas. The outdoor play areas are at the back of the premises and include covered play areas as well as separate spaces for younger and older children.

Staffing

The registered provider is the person in charge and works in the service most days of the week. The assistant manager is the person in charge when the registered provider is absent. There are 16 staff employed in the service, in addition to the registered provider, which includes 15 staff who work directly with the children. There are three staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM) which ensures favourable adult to child ratios in the ECCE rooms.

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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 15(1)(3), 16(1)(3), 19(1)(b), 23 and 25.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 record of a pre-school child.

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.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the service in relation to Garda Vetting not being available in respect of one member of staff. The non-compliance is reported under Regulation 9.

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) The assistant manager was the person in charge on the day of inspection.

(b) The designated person in charge was present for the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service. The duties and responsibilities of each member of staff were detailed in their contract of employment.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that of the 17 staff employed in the service, 5 staff members had been employed since the previous inspection in March 2024. All 17 staff files were reviewed as part of the inspection process.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for each staff member working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources such as previous schools and colleges.

(c) Garda vetting was available on file for members of staff working in the service. Garda vetting had been renewed, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting documentation was available for two staff working in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Staff employed to work with the pre-school children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(c) Evidence of completed Garda vetting was not available in respect of one member of staff. An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the service stating that the member of staff could not work in the service until Garda vetting had been obtained. The registered provider responded to the notice confirming that Garda vetting had been re-applied for in respect of the member of staff who would not work in the service again until it was completed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(c) Garda vetting for the member of staff has been reapplied for and received back from the Garda Vetting Bureau.

A Garda vetting list containing all staff members has been formed with dates of last vetting and due dates for reapplication for vetting. This list has been placed on the office notice board and put into office / management diary.

Reapplication dates for Garda Vetting on the above Garda Vetting list have been selected to ensure that the vetting process is completed in a timely manner, taking into account staff and management sickness or absence, delays in the vetting process etc.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of completed Garda vetting for the member of staff was received by the early years inspector on 20 October 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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 13 staff working directly with 66 children aged between 17 months and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection. The assistant manager was also available to provide assistance when required. There were 9 staff working directly with 45 children at 3pm on the day of inspection.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the recommended requirements throughout the day. On the afternoon of the inspection, when the children attending on a sessional basis had left the service the adult to child ratio was as follows:

Toddler room: 2 staff and 10 children aged between 17 months and 2 years 7 months old.

Playschool rooms 1 and 2: 4 staff and 14 children aged between 2 ½ years and 4 years old.

Playschool room 3 and 4: 3 staff and 21 children aged between 3 and 5 years old.

(4) During the morning sessions in Playschool rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 there were children attending on sessional, part-time and full day care bases. Additional staff, employed under AIM, were available in each room to support lower adult to child ratios for the duration of the session. The adult to child ratios in the morning were as follows:

Toddler room: 4 staff and 14 children aged between 17 months and 2 years 7 months old.

Playschool room 1: 3 staff and 15 children aged between 2 ½ years and 4 years old.

Playschool room 2: 2 staff and 7 children aged between 2 years 9 months and 4 years old.

Playschool room 3 and 4: 4 staff and 30 children aged between 3 and 5 years old.

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

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 sample size of 12 completed registration forms were assessed as part of the inspection.
- The forms currently used in the service contained the necessary information as detailed under parts (a) and (d) – (i) of this regulation.
- (3)© The registration forms were available in the office for inspection by an authorised person.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The current registration forms did not contain the following information:
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;
- © the date on which the child ceased to attend the service.
- It is acknowledged that following the inspection the service updated the registration forms to include this information and sent a copy of the new form to the early years inspector on 19 September 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) The service has updated the registration forms to include this information and sent a copy of the new form to the early years inspector on 19 September 2025.
- The service stated that any further changes to the registration form for Clareen Country Creche will be reviewed carefully.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:
- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;

- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The information required to be available in the service in writing, as detailed under parts (a) – (k) of this regulation were available in the service.

(3) The records were available on the premises for inspection by an authorised person.

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-*
 - (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

(1)(b) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children:

The children washed their hands before eating, after using the toilet and after outdoor play. Staff supervised the children and provided assistance or guidance when required.

The children enjoyed a balance between play indoors and outdoors throughout the day. Outdoor play was accessible to the children on a daily basis as there was a large, covered play area that could be used in all weathers.

Children could rest and sleep when they needed to. The younger children slept in cots in the sleep room. Sleep beds were placed in Playschool room 1 after dinner for the older children who had a daytime sleep.

The children enjoyed freedom of choice of activities throughout the day. Staff were observed to set up areas of interest which the children could engage with if they wanted to, for example a play dough table in Playroom 2 and an animal table in Playroom 1. Staff sat with the children to support their play and exploration.

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 service was kept secured. Entry and exit to the premises was managed by the staff. Separate entrances were used by the children depending on the rooms they were going to. The front door was used by the children going upstairs and back doors were used by children attending the downstairs rooms.

The outdoor area was renovated since the last inspection. A large area, under the swings, had been covered by artificial grass, which provided an all-weather, soft fall surface.

Warm water for hand washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C.

Staff supervised the children on the stairs with one member of staff leading and a second member of staff following. Children held onto the hand rail when using the stairs.

The children did not have access to the kitchen.

Medications and cleaning products were kept out of reach of the children. Medications were stored in high cupboards or in a fridge. Cleaning products were stored on high shelves.

Infection control:

The service had an infection control policy, a hand washing policy and a cleaning schedule. Staff were observed practicing 'clean as you go'. The toys, equipment and surfaces appeared clean and well maintained.

Administration of medication:

The service had a policy for the administration of medication to children. Signed parental consent was sought prior to any medication, whether prescribed or non-prescribed, being given to a child.

Safe sleep:

The service had a safe sleep policy. Staff monitored the children while they slept. If any child was asleep in the sleep room at outdoor play time then a member of staff remained in the room to supervise the sleeping child. Physical checks were carried out on the younger children every 10 minutes while they slept and a record was maintained of these sleep checks.

A member of staff remained in the rooms where older children slept on camp beds for the sleep time after dinner.

Fire safety:

Fire escape routes were kept clear of obstruction.

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) All staff held current certification as first aid responders (FAR) valid until 2027.
- (2)(a) Suitably equipped, wall mounted first aid cabinets were available in each room.
- (b) First aid was available to the children if required while attending the service.