

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015TY025
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Gort na nÓg Childcare Centre
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Holycross Village, Holycross, Thurles, Tipperary
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<b>Eircode:</b>	E41 C2C8
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Michéal Lowry
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	08/06/2023
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	26	PM	23
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Tipperary
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L McGeeney
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<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

This full day community service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years. A registered school aged care service is also provided for children aged between 5 and 12 years. There is a separate room in the premises for the school aged care service.

The service operates Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. A 3-hour sessional service, funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children, operates from 9.30am – 12.30pm, Monday – Friday, for 38 weeks of the year.

The premises is located behind St. Michael’s National School in the village of Holycross in North Tipperary. The premises is a purpose built, single storey, detached building with 5 activity rooms, kitchen, dining room, office, staff room, sleep room, storage rooms and sanitary accommodation areas. There are enclosed outdoor play areas at the front and back of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service. The manager is the person in charge on a daily basis supported by administration staff, catering staff, cleaning staff and childcare staff. There were 10 staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection, with the service manager available to provide relief in the rooms when needed.

### 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, 11, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed significant risk was identified under Regulation 29, Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 Management and Recruitment

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

*(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 file of the member of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 20 October 2021 was reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) There were two written, validated past employer references available in respect of the member of staff.

(b) Not applicable as available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff and relevant documents held on file.

(d) Not applicable as the member of staff had not lived outside the State.

(4) All staff who worked directly with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 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.*

*(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 10 staff working directly with 26 children between the three rooms on the morning of the inspections as follows:

Buttercup Babies room: 1 child aged 8 months and 9 children aged between 1 and 2 years with 4 staff.

Caterpillars room: 3 children aged 2 years 10 months – 3 years and 6 children aged 3 – 4 years with 3 staff.

Ladybirds room: 7 children aged 3 – 5 years with 3 staff.

The service manager was also available to work in the rooms with the children if required.

The catering staff were present in the service but not included in the adult/child ratios as they did not work directly with the children.

(4) The adult/child ratio was maintained within the recommended ratios throughout the day, including during staff breaks, nappy changing times and sleep times.

(8)(a) There were at least 2 staff present in the service while it was in operation. The staff rosters indicated that there were at least five staff present when the service opened at 8am and at least 4 staff present when the service closed at 5.30pm.

### 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 children had access to one of three activity rooms according to their age and stage of development. Each room was laid out with defined interest areas, dining/tabletop activities areas, cosy seating areas and open spaces for floor play and movement. There was a large, enclosed area with a padded floor in the Buttercup Babies room where the children could play or relax away from the main activity area. The space between the reception desk and the corridor to Ladybirds and Caterpillars rooms was also used as an activity space during the day, which provided children with a change of environment.

Ladybirds and Caterpillars rooms opened directly into their outdoor play areas which enabled the children to flow between indoor and outdoor play as desired during the day.

(b) Toddlin' Tulips room had been converted to a sleep room for children aged under 2 years while the sleep room was out of use. There were six standard cots with fitted mattresses and individual bed linen for each child. The windows were fitted with blinds so that the room could be darkened for sleep time. Electric fans were available to aid the circulation of air and cooling of the room in warm weather. The older children were provided with camp beds which were laid out in Caterpillars room after dinner for children aged over 2 years who required a sleep during the day. Cosy seating areas were available in each room where the children could rest and relax during the day as they desired.

(3) There were three outdoor play areas available to the children: the enclosed garden at the front of the premises, which was primarily used by the children from Buttercup Babies room and two areas at the back of the premises, directly accessible from Ladybirds and Caterpillars rooms. The children enjoyed daily play in the outdoors. The front garden had sections of soft play surface, grass and planting beds. The other outdoor play areas had grass surfaces with concrete paths between the premises and the outdoor space. There was a slightly submerged paved area used for sand, gravel and small world play with trucks and tractors in the area off Ladybirds room.

### 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 was well equipped with good quality furniture, toys and materials for both indoor and outdoor play. The furniture in each room was suitable to the age and stage of development of the children using the rooms. Buttercup Babies room was furnished with low level tables, wooden toddler chairs with splayed legs, arm rests, leg stabilisers and harnesses and highchairs. There was a sofa where the children and staff could sit together. Low level open shelves displayed the toys in a manner that enabled the children to see what was available and to access it independently. Furniture was removed to the stored room when not in use to allow for more clear floor space for the younger children to move around.

The furniture in Ladybirds and Caterpillars rooms was taller than in Buttercup Babies room, with a mixture of medium and larger chairs and table heights to accommodate the children appropriately. Sofa seating was provided in the cosy corner. Open shelves, deep windowsills and toys boxes were used to display toys and materials in an accessible manner. Communally used equipment, such as the mobile arts trolley, were stored in the corridor where they could be accessed when needed.

Each room had a low-level countertop and sink unit where water for activities could be accessed.

The outdoor areas were furnished with playhouses, push toys, tyres, ride-on toys, balls, tuff tray tables with activities such as jelly slime, rockers and easels. There were paddling pools available that were brought out for use several times a week during the summer. A larger pool was installed in the Ladybird's area. The pool was partially filled for use and emptied after use.

### 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. Most of the foods eaten by the children during the day were provided by the service with the exception of packed lunches for children who wanted to bring them. The staff in the kitchen and in each room were aware of which children had food allergies and intolerances and provided safe alternatives as appropriate, for example, soya or lactose-free milks were used as substitutes in dairy and lactose-free diets. There was a three-week rotating menu. Morning snack on the day of inspection included cereal with milk and fruit platters. Dinner was chicken curry with rice, with second helpings available for children who wanted more. Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day and drinks of water or milk were served with meals and snacks.

### 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.*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*

*(a) no person other than-*

*(i) pre-school child attending the service,*

*(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*

*(iii) an employee, or*

*(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*

*(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) The service was in the process of introducing an electronic record management and communication system designed for use in early years services. Currently the application was used for recording the arrival and departure times of the children. Paper records were also being completed while staff were becoming familiar with the new process. Staff were responsible for maintaining the children's attendance records.

- (3)(a) Unauthorised persons were not allowed in the service without the permission of the person in charge.
- (b) A visitor book was maintained at the reception desk for visitors, such as the early years inspector, to sign in.

### 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 two staff present on the day of inspection who held current certification in first aid response (FAR) valid to 21 July 2023. Both staff were also enrolled in a refresher course to ensure continuity of their certification.

(2)(a) First aid boxes were available in each of the activity rooms.

(b) The first aid boxes were 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, most recently on 5 May 2023.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. A fire register was maintained for these records and all records associated with fire safety in the service. The firefighting equipment had an annual service in September 2022. The smoke alarm system was last serviced on 5 May 2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the wall in each room.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service was insured for up to 60 children attending at any one time valid to 27 March 2024.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

#### Non-Compliance Information

The following was observed on the day of inspection:

(a) and (d) The ceiling of the sleep room was damaged by the ingress of water, which staff stated occurred following a storm when the rain leaked through the roof. The ceiling was now dry but there was peeling paint and black mould growth. The room was out of use and kept locked so that the children could not gain access to the room. The roof damage will need to be repaired and remedial works carried out in the room before it can be used again.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

The Chairperson and another member of the Board of Directors have been contacted and informed about the ceiling in the sleep room. They are very aware of the urgency of the situation.

A contractor has looked at the damage and will revert back to us with a quote detailing the work required and the cost and we are currently waiting on other contractors to look at the roof and provide quotations.

The Board is mindful that the situation needs to be rectified as soon as possible and this is on the agenda for discussion at the next Board Meeting.

In the meantime, we will continue to keep the room locked and use an alternative room for the children to sleep in.

#### Summary Comment

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