

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY025
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Name of Service:	Gort na nOg Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Holycross Village, Holycross, Thurles, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E41 C2C8
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michéal Lowry
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	19
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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 and D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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 community full day care service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided during the school year. The service operates Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. A daily three-hour sessional service, funded under the early childhood care and education (ECCE) for eligible children, operates during the 38-week school year from late August until June.

The service is operated from a purpose built, detached, single-storey premises behind the national school in the village of Holycross in north Tipperary. The service consists of four activity rooms including one for use by the school age care service, a sleep room, office, staff room, kitchen, dining room and outdoor play areas. There is another sleep room but it cannot be used at present due to roof damage and black mould-like substance on the ceiling and walls.

Staffing

There are 18 adults attached to the setting, including the registered provider, who is not service based. Ten staff members were present at the time of inspection, of whom eight were working directly with the children. An administrator and a cook were not involved in the direct care of 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/ 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)(8), 19(1)(a), 22, 25, 26(1)(4), 28 and 29, however, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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.

Additional Information

A Regulatory Compliance Meeting was held on 16 October 2025 to discuss how the service would address the issues with the roof, including short term remedial actions such as cleaning patches of mould, and applying for funding to carry-out structural repairs to eliminate the source of the problem.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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) A person in charge was assigned to oversee the operation of the childcare facility. A deputy person in charge and a room leader were available to deputise in her absence.

(b) The deputy was present when the unannounced inspection commenced and facilitated the inspection process.

(c) The service had a management structure, which clearly outlined the names and roles of each adult attached to the setting.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that three new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. One of the new staff members worked directly with the children. The staff file for the registered provider was also reviewed as part of the inspection process. A total of four files were reviewed.

(a) Three of the eight required written and validated references were from past employers.

(b) There were five written and validated references on file from sources other than previous employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the four adults and were dated within the previous three years. This was in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

(d) Employment history records demonstrated that police vetting from other jurisdictions was required for one of the adults and the relevant documentation was in place.

(4) The new member of staff who worked with the children was employed under a community employment scheme in a learning capacity towards acquiring a recognised qualification in early childhood care and education.

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 19 children aged between 1 and 5 years old being supervised by 8 staff across 3 rooms on the morning of the inspection.

(2) The adult to child ratio was maintained within the requirements on the day of inspection.

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

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) The following was observed on the day of inspection through direct observation, review of records and discussions with staff:

Basic needs of the child:

The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors and outdoors. All children enjoyed play in the outdoors on the day of inspection.

The children from Ladybirds and Caterpillars rooms moved to the dining room for their meals and snacks, which provided them with a change of environment and an opportunity to engage with the catering staff who prepared their meals. There was a handwashing sink in the dining room where the children washed and dried their hands before eating. The staff supervised the children while they ate and assisted those who needed help. The staff were observed to positively encourage the children to eat their dinner by saying 'who's going to have a happy bowl?' and the children eagerly responded 'I'm going to have a happy bowl!'.

The children could sleep and rest according to their individual sleep needs. There were six cots available in the sleep room as well as camp beds for use by the children aged over 2 years old. The camp beds were set up in the school age care room as this room was not used for other purposes during the summer.

Physical and material environment:

The rooms were equipped with toys, materials and activities suitable to the age and stage of development of the children. There were also resources stored in the corridor, such as the art trolley, which could be accessed by all of the rooms when needed.

There were a range of seating types suitable to the ages of the children and the different activities they needed seating for: there were high chairs for the babies to use at mealtimes and toddler chairs with splayed legs for stability for use by the younger children. The chairs were taller in the rooms used by older children. There were also child sized or standard sofas in the rooms.

Toys and materials were displayed at the children’s eye level on open shelves, on windowsills and in interest area furniture such as play kitchens.

There were two outdoor areas: an area at the front of the premises that was primarily used by the younger children and an area off the Ladybirds and Caterpillars rooms that was divided by a fence and gate which could be opened to give the children access to both sides.

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 and a three-week rolling menu plan. The service supplied all meals and snacks that the children ate during the day with some exceptions. The children in Ladybird’s room could bring a packed lunch if they wanted to and bottles for infants on formula were brought in, made up, then refrigerated. Children were given water or milk to drink with each meal and snack and had access to water in their rooms. Foods eaten on the day of inspection included a morning snack of mixed fruit presented as a fruit platter and buttered toast served at 10am. Dinner was served at around midday and consisted of roast chicken, mashed potato, mixed vegetables and gravy.

There was a member of staff dedicated to catering, who was aware of the children with allergies or special diets.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire safety:

The fire exit doors in the Baby room and the current sleep room were obstructed by furniture and equipment which included a play kitchen, child sized chair and electric fan. This posed a safety risk to the children and staff as their exit may be impeded in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire safety:

Doorway has been cleared and management and staff are more mindful that the emergency needs to be kept clear at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire safety:

A photograph of the room, with fire exit kept clear of obstruction, was reviewed by the early years inspector on 22 September 2025.

Summary Comment

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

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) The relevant certification was available to demonstrate that eight adults had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training. According to the staff roster, at least one of these adults was available to the children at all times.

(2)(a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes or bags in each activity room, in the kitchen and in the office as well as additional supplies for replenishing the boxes as needed.

(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 9 June 2025.

(b) A list of the number and type of firefighting equipment was in place. The maintenance records indicated that the smoke detection system was serviced on 14 May 2025 and the firefighting equipment was last checked by a fire safety company on 18 September 2024.

(4) The fire evacuation procedure, which outlined details of the steps to be followed in the event of a fire, was displayed in each of the care rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate indicated that adequate cover was in place for the full day care service, with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.

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*

Compliance Information

(d) The service had a cleaning schedule. Staff were responsible for all cleaning in the service and were observed practicing 'clean as you go' of table-tops and floors. Cleaning record sheets were displayed on the walls in each room and in the sanitary accommodation areas and were signed by staff when tasks were completed.

Non-Compliance Information

(a) As identified in previous reports dated 8 June 2023 and 4 July 2024, the roof of the premises leaked during wet weather which had caused significant growth of a black mould-like substance on the ceiling in several rooms: Ladybirds room, dining room, kitchen, staff room and the room formerly used as a sleep room. The sleep room was the first area affected and where the black mould-like substance was the most extensive. Several of the areas affected by the mould-like substance were occupied by the children during the day. The mould is potentially an environmental hazard and could pose a significant risk to the children's and staff's health.

There was another section of the ceiling in the corridor that staff said was prone to leaking in wet weather though there doesn't appear to be a mould problem at that point. The registered provider and service manager were aware that the issue needed to be addressed but they have explained that they are not in a position to do so at

present. However, the issue of the mould-like substance needs to be addressed to ensure the health of all those attending the service.

(d) There were areas of the service that were not part of the daily cleaning schedule and which required attention as they appeared dirty, dusty or in need of maintenance such as the following:

1. There appeared to be dirt in the wood grain of the doors into each room in the high-touch parts such as the area below the handle. Some doors were marked by glue from old sticky tape.
2. The black mould-like substance on the ceilings was not cleaned or treated.
3. The outdoor toys were weather damaged from being outside as there was no outdoor storage to protect them from rain, wind and sun.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

As explained to the inspectors the service does not have the financial means to address the damage caused by leaks and mould. They contacted a number of companies who specialise in mould testing and removal. The service has been in talks with a company and they are waiting on them to revert back with a price of doing a test on the mould.

With regards to cleaning, the service has a clean as you go procedure in place and at midterms and during the holiday periods, staff do a deep clean. They are aware that regular deep cleans are required. The service has tried to get a Community Employment participant who could do the cleaning and maintenance of the building.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the emails between the company who deals with mould and the reissued advertisement for a Community Employment participant were reviewed by the early years inspector on 22 September 2025.

A video and email detailing remedial works carried out to address the mould on a temporary basis and progress on funding application to effect long term solutions were received on 25 November 2025.

Summary Comment

While the service has taken action to address the issues caused by the leak in the roof. The roof is still in need of repair. Regulation 29(a) remains outstanding. All non-compliances will be reviewed on the next inspection.