

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY079
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Name of Service:	Tir na NÓg
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Address of Service:	Ballintoher, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 TW13
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kathleen McKenna
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	7	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

This sessional early years service was established in 2001 to provide care and education to children aged 2 – 6 years. The service operates Monday – Friday, 9am – 12pm. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from two rooms in the registered providers residence near the town of Nenagh in north Tipperary. The children have access to one main and one secondary activity room, sanitary accommodation area, outdoor play area and sheltered outdoor play barn.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children each day supported by a member of staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). Both staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and development at levels 5 or 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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(2)(4), 11(1)(3)(8), 20(1)(3), 21, 22, 24(1), 25, 26(1)(4) and 28.

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 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 file of the member of staff who commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 27 May 2021 was reviewed as part of the inspection process. Staff files of other staff were previously assessed and found to be compliant.

(2)(a) Written validated references from past employers were 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 were held on file.

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

(4) Staff who worked directly with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education or equivalent at levels 5 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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) There were 2 staff working directly with 7 children aged between 3 and 6 years old on the day of inspection.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 to 4 which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 to 11.

(8)(c) There were two staff present while the service was in operation. If there was occasion for the registered provider to work alone at any time, then a second adult, familiar with the service and located on the premises was available to call on in the event of an emergency.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children had access to both indoor and outdoor play and work environments. The indoor space consisted of a main activity room with a smaller room adjacent to it, where the children could extend their opportunities for exploration and learning through play. The outdoor space was at the back of the premises and included a large play barn which enabled the children to play outdoors in all weathers.

(b) There was a cosy seating area in the main room and a large carpet on the floor which made the room feel homely and which absorbed sound, helping to maintain a quieter atmosphere in the room. The children could rest and relax away from activities when they wanted to during the day.

(3)(a) There was an enclosed and gated area at the back of the premises, which the children, parents, staff and visitors passed through to access the entrance door of the service. This space had a concrete surface. There was a second enclosed area at the side of the premises where the children could dig and plant and engage with the freestanding climbing frame and slide. The play barn was across the yard from the entrance door of the service and had soft fall matting over the concrete ground surface.

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 indoor and outdoor environments were well resourced with a wide range of toys and materials including Montessori equipment, construction toys, open ended and messy play materials, arts and crafts materials, small world toys, imaginative play materials, books, music making resources and physical play equipment. Toys and equipment were displayed on open shelving units. The main room was furnished with child and adult sized chairs and child sized tables. The chairs and tables were moved around into different configurations depending on the activity, for example, the tables and chairs were set up in the room for dining and tabletop activities then moved away for floor play and free play time.

The staff and children made playdough on the morning of the inspection, experimenting with the basic ingredients they used wholemeal flour which gave the playdough a more textured feel that the children enjoyed. The registered provider said that the children loved working with sensory materials, so they used a lot of different ones in the service each week.

The outdoor area was equipped with a playhouse, push toys, wind catchers, wheelbarrows and plant pots. The play barn was equipped with a floor to ceiling climbing frame with two slides, cubby house and table with bench seats. There were also mud and gravel kitchens, small world toys and lots of sensory materials to explore.

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. Children brought a packed lunch which they ate together at 10.30am at tables in the main room. Children were given as long as they needed to eat. Food eaten on the day of inspection included: sandwiches, cheese, bread, smoothies, yoghurt, fromage frais and fruit (blueberries, sultanas and apple). Children brought their own drink bottles full of water or squash that were available to them throughout the morning and refilled with water when empty.

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) Staff were responsible for recording the arrival and departure of the children each day. The paper-based register was kept in the entrance hall to facilitate this.

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 registered provider kept up to date with first aid training, completing a refresher of first aid response (FAR) training in June 2023.

(2)(a) A first aid box was available in the main room, stored on a shelf, where it could be easily accessed when required.

(b) The first aid box was 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 7 November 2023.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment was serviced annually, most recently in September 2023. The wired smoke alarm was tested each month during the fire drill.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to follow in the event of a fire was displayed on the wall in the entrance hall.

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 11 children at any one time valid until 27 March 2024.