

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY134
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Name of Service:	Mullinahone Community Playgroup
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Address of Service:	Carrick Road, Mullinahone, Thurles, Co Tipperary
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Brett
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	06/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Glenmorgan Building, Ferryhouse, Clonmel, Co Tipperary E91RF38
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Inspection undertaken by:	Antoinette McNamara
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Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

This community playgroup was established in 1995 and moved to its current location in 2007. A play based sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) service is provided to children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates a morning session from 9.00 to 12.00 and an afternoon session from 12.30 to 15.30. The playgroup operates from a prefabricated building to the rear of the community centre in the village of Mullinahone. The building consists of an early years room, sanitary accommodation, office and outdoor space to the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs three staff members to work directly with children. The registered provider does not work directly in the service. Staff members held qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

Regulation 8 (1) Notification of change in circumstances,

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4) Management and recruitment,

Regulation 11(1)(3) Staffing levels,
Regulation 15 (1) (a-i) (3)(c) Records in relation to a pre-school child,
Regulation 20 Facilities for rest any play
Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of the child,
Regulation 25 (1)(2)(a)(b) First aid,
Regulation 26 (1)(a)(b)(4) Fire safety measures.

On inspection a non-compliance was identified under Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances.

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 referral to Services Operating Outside of Registration Status (SOORS) was made following the inspection due to a non-compliance under Regulation 8.

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 II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The service was found not to have notified the registration department of the Early Years Inspectorate, in writing, of changes in the registered number of children the service could accommodate. The service was registered to provide care to 18 children. There were 19 children attending the morning session. A referral to Services Operating Outside of Registration Status (SOORS) was made following the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Service has been contacted by the Regulatory Support Office. A change in circumstances is in the process of being submitted for the number of children attending the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Email from the service stating that they are in the process of submitting a change in circumstances.

Summary Comment

This regulation remains non-compliant as the registered provider has not completed the change in circumstance process. The registered provider is required to submit the required documentation to complete the change in circumstance. This issue remains outstanding as regulatory compliance has not been achieved.

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

(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) There was a designated person in charge and a named deputy person in charge who was able to deputise, as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present for the inspection. A person in charge is present daily. The staff files for three staff and the registered provider were reviewed on the day.

(2)(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 each staff member 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) Certificates of qualifications for the staff working with children were available on file demonstrating that they held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care of the children.

(3) The person in charge ensured that the adult to children ratio was maintained. The service exceeded the minimum child to adult ratio required under the regulation.

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

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

Non-Compliance Information

A sample of 10 completed registration forms were reviewed as part of the inspection process. The service did not maintain a written record of the following required information on two children's registration forms:

(h) Record of immunisations.

It is acknowledged that the remaining eight registration forms contained the required information as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The uncompleted registration forms have since been completed and relevant documentation provided. These records must be returned to the service prior to a child commencing in the service as stated in the admission policy. All forms will be checked by service manager on return.

Supporting documentation submitted

Updated policy and photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Corrective actions have been accepted and will be assessed in practice on next inspection.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The indoor space was a large bright room with sanitary accommodation. The children’s artwork decorated the walls. There were child sized tables and chairs for tabletop activities such as Montessori work, puzzles and eating at snack time. In one corner of the room was a cosy corner with a well-stocked library. The room had several defined interest areas which were appropriately resourced, including the home corner, art and craft materials and small world materials. There were low level open shelves around the room where Montessori work and jigsaws/puzzles were easily accessible to the children.

The outdoor space was surrounded by a wooden fence and was secure. There was also a covered outdoor area. There was a wide range of outdoor toys available to the children such as a covered sand pit, ride on toys, slides and playhouses. Distinct areas of interest provided children with opportunities to engage in a range of play activities while enjoying the outdoors. There was a well-resourced mud kitchen and blackboards available to the children in the covered area.

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 premises was adequately secured to prevent children leaving unsupervised and unauthorised persons gaining access. The outdoor area was also secure. Cleaning agents and hazardous materials were stored inaccessible to children. Blind cords were securely mounted out of reach of children. Pinch guards covered the hinges on all doors to prevent injury to children. Radiator covers were present to prevent injury to children.

Infection control:

There were designated children's toilets available, which contained an adequate number of toilets and sinks for the children attending the service. Hand washing facilities were adequately stocked with paper hand towels and soap. There was warm running water in the children's toilets. Hand washing steps were present in the sanitary facilities. The staff and children were observed to follow good hand hygiene practices such as washing hands before eating. Hand sanitizer was also available in the service. Staff were observed to clean the tables after snack time.

Fire safety:

Fire exits were found to be unobstructed on the day of inspection.
There were fire evacuation procedures displayed in a prominent area within the service.
Staff were trained in the use of firefighting equipment.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

1. Perishable foods were not stored in a fridge. This caused a risk of food spoilage and food borne illnesses.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

Each morning the children's perishable foods are placed in the fridge.

Supporting documentation submitted

A fridge was present in the service on inspection.

Summary Comment

Corrective actions have been accepted and will be assessed in practice on next inspection.

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 staff trained in first aid responder (FAR) available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children 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 fire fighting 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)(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 had an annual service in April 2025. The smoke alarm system was last serviced in April 2025.

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

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was no record of regular fire drills kept. The last recorded fire drill was in November 2024. It is acknowledged that staff reported monthly fire drills take place.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Monthly fire drills have since been carried out in both morning and afternoon sessions. Fire drills are now scheduled monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Corrective actions have been accepted and will be assessed in practice on next inspection.