

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH019
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Name of Service:	St. Kieran's Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	St. Kieran's Community Centre, Tormey Villas, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 W7P3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Grehan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	23
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O' Connor Hughes & O. Sharkey
Title:	Early Years Inspector and National Inspection Manager

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 community service is registered as a full day care service and operates between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 12 months to 6 years of age. The Early Years' Service is co-located in the grounds of St. Kieran's Community Centre and operates out of a purpose built two storey building. The toddler room is located on the ground floor of the building. The pre-school room is located on the first floor. A sleep room and a kitchenette are provided.

Two outdoor play areas are located to the front and side of the premises. Onsite parking and set down facilities are provided. The service is situated on the outskirts of the town of Athlone, County Westmeath.

Staffing

Two designated persons in charge and six adults were working directly with the children on the 22 January 2025. The following adults were also present during the inspection, an adult employed on a community placement scheme on a part time basis, a student on work experience, an administrator and a cleaner.

Both designated persons in charge attended the closing meeting. The registered provider does not work directly with children and was not present in the service.

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.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the persons 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.

Compliance Information

The registered provider submitted a change in circumstance to TUSLA registration office on the 15 January 2024 in respect of a change in the person in charge and age range of the children attending the service. This change was accepted by the registration office.

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)

Two designated persons were in charge of the service and deputised for each other as required.

(b)

Twelve staff files including the registered provider and the file for the student on work placement were reviewed.

The following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available for the twelve staff members from past employers and from a source other than a past employer.

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of twelve files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as no staff members had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. One of the designated persons in charge held a Level 8 major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were not available in respect of the student on work experience.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Both references have been verified and kept of file.

Early Years Employer Service Staff Induction Checklist has been obtained and will be used going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

References submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were twenty-eight children attending the service supervised directly by eight adults in the morning. Twenty-three children were present in the afternoon supervised by six adults.

(8)(a)

The staff roster reviewed indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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:

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1)(i)

Further to a corrective action taken since the last inspection on the 22 February 2023, written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency, was available in respect of children attending the toddler and pre-school rooms.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

Parental information pertaining to Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g) was available for review.

- (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) policies and procedures.

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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Children were happily engaged in the various play experiences and activities including creative, sensory and manipulative play in both the toddler room and pre-school room. Children enjoyed story and song time in the toddler room supported by the staff members.

A menu was available in respect of the main meal which is provided by an outside catering company. Parents provide the morning and afternoon snacks for their children. Children enjoyed a healthy snack consisting of sandwiches, crackers, cheese and a selection of fruit with water to drink. At approximately 13:00 the main meal of the day consisting of chicken casserole, potatoes and vegetables was served to the children. Extra portions were available if required by children. Children took their time conversing and interacting while eating. Regular nappy changing was carried out and as required. Cosy rest areas were noted in the toddler and pre-school rooms. Children were observed to sleep and rest in the toddler room in the afternoon supervised by staff members.

Staff members held children in positive regard using their individual names, interacting and conversing with children at eye level. A key person system was in operation in the service. Staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Access and inclusion plans were in place for children requiring extra support. Good communication was observed between the staff member and child during nappy changing.

Children settling into the toddler room were supported by staff members with reassurance and cuddles given as needed. The settling in period was of short duration as per the child's needs and the services settling in policy. Staff sat with children working with them at small group tabletop activities in the pre-school room. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff. A staff biography was noted in the main entrance of the service.

The service worked in partnership with parents. A handheld electronic device was used by staff members and provides a two-way communication between the service and parent outlining the child's daily routine and play activities. The child's learning journal depicting the child's developmental observations, play and work activities is shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term. A verbal handover is given to parents at collection time. The indoor environment in the toddler and pre-school rooms provided a range of developmentally appropriate, creative and enriching experiences for all children. The rooms were bright and colourful. Areas of interest included dress up, a home area, rest area, construction area and a shop. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. Children's artwork and photographs were noted.

Two outdoor play areas are available for children to use. The toddler play area could be accessed directly from the toddler room. An absorbent surface was noted in the toddler area and it was equipped with a large climbing frame and slide, a playhouse and wooden kitchen. Older children were observed to enjoy sensory play using the sand box in the sheltered outdoor play area to the front of the service. Children cycled bikes, trikes and ride on cars in the outdoor play area. A storage shed and container were in place in both play areas for the storage of toys and equipment.

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 entrance door to the service was secure and accessed through a bell and key coded system. Safety checklists for the indoor and outdoor environments were available for review. The inspectors signed the visitors book on arrival.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents with the exception of the non-compliance outlined below.

Infection Control:

Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. All toys and materials were easily cleanable.

Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school rooms and in the sanitary accommodation. Paper hand towel and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation.

The nappy changing practice observed was carried out correctly as per the nappy changing procedure displayed in the toddler nappy changing area in the sanitary accommodation.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet.

Children's perishable foods were stored correctly in the refrigerator. Temperatures were recorded daily and indicated temperatures were maintained at 5 degrees Celsius or less.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely in the service. A medication record book was available in the service.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in a sleep log. A staff member was observed to sit with children at sleep time in the toddler sleep room. A wall thermometer was noted in the sleep room. An environmental temperature of 19.9 degrees Celsius was recorded in the sleep room.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed in the service. A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the premises.

Outing:

Risk assessments were available for review for outings undertaken by the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Thermostatically controlled water was not available at the sink in the pre-school room. The temperature recorded was 53.1 degrees Celsius which presented a potential risk of scald injury. Upon the request of the inspector a corrective action was taken by the designated person in charge, a sign was posted to alert staff members of the high temperature of the water.
2. A piece of plastic on the front of the third drawer of the low-level shelving in the toddler room sanitary accommodation had a jagged edge which posed a potential risk of injury to a child.

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing bin in the sanitary accommodation adjacent to the toddler room was not suitable for infection control purposes as it was not pedal bin operated and did not have a tight secure seal.
2. The mattress cover on one cot in the sleep room was stained and required replacement.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The plumber came to control the water temperature and was booked to come back and install a system. The plumber installed thermostatic mixing valves to control the water temperature.
2. The unit has been replaced. A designated person has been allocated to carry out monthly risk assessments along with regular weekly risk assessments.

Infection Control:

1. An airtight bin has been purchased to replace the bin. Staff have been made aware of the importance of using an airtight bin for the disposal of nappies.
2. The mattress has been replaced. The cot mattresses will be added to the weekly risk assessment document and inspected weekly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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 records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)(b)
A visitor log for the service was available for review with the following details included.

- Date.
- Person's name.
- Contact number.
- Reason for entry.
- The name of person who approved access.
- The check in and out times.

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)
Two adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) were available on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)
Two first aid boxes were available in the toddler and pre-school rooms.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the children in the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)

The first aid boxes were not stocked in line with TUSLA requirements as outlined in the Quality Regulatory Framework document.

- The normal saline solution was out of date in first aid boxes.
- The burns dressing was out of date in the first aid box in the pre-school room.
- There was an insufficient number of medium bandages in the first aid boxes.
- Adult medication was stored in the first aid box in the pre-school room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The first aid boxes have been restocked using The Tusla first aid checklist.

A designated person has been allocated to monitor the first aid boxes monthly in both rooms.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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)(a)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 3 December 2024.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises.

The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 31 July 2024 the 25 September 2024 respectively.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were supervised by staff members in the indoor and outdoor environments during the inspection. Children were observed to be handed over to their parent/guardian at collection time by the staff member.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(c) an incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time;

Compliance Information

(c)

The registered provider submitted a notification of incident form to TUSLA registration office in respect of the service closing on the 22 April 2024.

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