

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH055
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Name of Service:	Naíonra Lios Na Nog
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Address of Service:	Ascaill Lios Uí Mhullain, Lios Uí Mhullain, Atha Luain, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 RP03
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Name of Registered Provider:	Carrie O'Connor
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	NA
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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
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).

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Description of service

This part time operates on a Monday to Friday basis. Children in attendance are currently enrolled in the service on a sessional basis only.

The service participates in the Early Education and Care scheme though the medium of Irish language. An afterschool service is also provided.

The Early Years' Service is located in two classrooms, namely pre-school room 1 and 2 of the local Gael Scoil in Athlone, Co Westmeath. The service has the use of the national school's outdoor play area located adjacent to the service. The hall in the national school is available for use by the pre-school children.

Staffing

The registered provider employs two staff members. The registered provider and two staff members were working directly with children on the 15 April 2026.

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 9- Management and recruitment - (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) (3)(4)

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Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (2) (8)(a)

Regulation 19- Health, welfare and development of child - (1)(a)

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and play

Regulation 21- Equipment and Materials

Regulation 22 – Food and Drink

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance

Regulation 25- First aid - (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26- Fire Safety Measures (1)(2)(3)(4)

Regulation 27- Supervision

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 33- Furnishing of the information

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.

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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

(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,*

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection.

Three staff files including the registered provider were reviewed. The registered provider stated that one new staff member has commenced in the service in September 2025. The following was noted.

(2)(a)(b)

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

Two written validated references were available in respect of the staff members from previous employers and a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the registered provider and staff members.

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 member or the registered provider had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The registered provider ensured vetting procedures were carried out prior to the employment of staff in the service.

(4)

The registered provider and staff members working directly with children attending the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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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-six children attending the service supervised directly by three adults in the morning session.

(8)(a)

Documentation reviewed indicated that two adults are on the premises during the hours of operation.

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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)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. Children enjoyed extended physical play and freedom of movement in the hall supported by the adults. Children were observed to be totally engaged learning about the life cycle of a caterpillar through visual and audio learning. They enjoyed exploring the live caterpillars shown to them by the registered provider in pre-school room 1. Children enjoyed free time to read the story books they choose after snack time and discussed the books with their friends and staff member in pre-school room 2.

Children were encouraged to be independent as they washed their hands and went to the toilet supervised by the registered provider. Children engaged in conversations with the staff and their friends as they sat together in the pre-school rooms for snack time. A little helper system was in place as some children handed plates and drinks out to their peers for snack time.

The staff were positive and respectful when speaking to children in a quiet calm tone of voice. Staff were familiar with children and their personality. Individual names were used and eye contact maintained with the children during play activities and while sitting with the children at snack time. Children who were upset were reassured by staff in a kind and caring manner. Access and inclusion plans were in place for children requiring extra support and supervision.

Upon discussion, the staff member informed the inspector that partnership with parents occurs in the following ways: A verbal handover is given on collection. Children's play activities and updates are communicated through a social media application (SMS). Parents are invited to meet with the staff and registered provider as required. The child's learning journal depicting the child's play activities and child development observations are shared with parents regularly during the pre-school term and parents are given the opportunity to submit feedback to the

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service. Links to the local community were maintained as the staff member stated there was a recent visit to the service of a paramedic and ambulance to educate children in the service.

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 19 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)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

Cosy rest areas were provided in pre-school rooms 1 and 2.

(3)(a)

The national school outdoor play area is located adjacent to the service. A tarmac and synthetic surface area was noted. A new mulch area with climbing bars has been put in place since the last inspection on the 11 November 2024. The registered provider stated the service uses the Búntas sports bag, provided by Sports Ireland, with toys and equipment for physical play in the outdoor play area.

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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 chairs and tables were child sized suitable to each child's age and development. Equipment was well maintained, durable and easy to clean. Materials including bricks, blocks, cars, tractors, books, art and crafts, jigsaws, musical instruments, dolls, construction toys were accessible to children.

A variety of suitable play materials and equipment was available to support children in various types of creative, manipulative, imaginary and free play in the indoor environment.

Personal belongings and bags were stored individually for each child.

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 registered provider informed the inspector the service had engaged with the Bia Blasta (Delicious food) programme and provide a variety of healthy snacks to children on a Monday to Friday basis.

At 11:00 the registered provider and staff member prepared the snack which consisted of a large selection of fruit and vegetables, toast, crackers, organic healthy bars and yogurt with water to drink.

A refrigerator was available in pre-school rooms 1 and 2 for the storage of perishable foods.

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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 service was secure from unauthorised access as the school secretary in the school reception area viewed the inspector's identification before allowing entry to the pre-school service.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival.

Infection Control:

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

Staff were observed to wash their hands during the inspection.

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school rooms.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Mechanical ventilation was in operation in the sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was given during the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely out of reach of children in pre-school room 1.

Fire Safety:

The fire emergency exits were free from obstruction in the premises. A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the premises.

Outing:

The registered provider stated the service does not undertake outings.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

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)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by the registered provider on the log.

(4)

A record was available in respect of (3)(b) for the time period required.

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

(2)(a)
A first aid box was located in pre-school room 1 of the service.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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 18 March 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The smoke alarms and firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced on the 14 November 2025 and the 5 March 2026 respectively.

(2)

The fire records were open to inspection to (a)(b)(c).

(3)

Documentation indicated that records in respect of (2) were retained for a period of 5 years.

(4)

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A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in at the front entrance 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

The registered provider and staff members were observed to supervise children by sight or sound in both pre-school rooms 1 and 2, when escorting children to and from the Hall and when using the toilet during the inspection.

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 2027.

Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may reasonably require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.

Compliance Information

The registered provider furnished the required information for the inspection.