

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH069
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Name of Service:	Naíonra An Muileann Gearr
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Address of Service:	Saint Loman's GAA Club., Saint Lomans LakePoint Park, Devlin Road, An Muileann Gearr, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N91 PN7T
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah O Keefe
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Springfield, 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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

This part time service provides an Early Childhood Care and Education programme to children aged between 2 to 6 years. The service operates on a Monday to Friday basis between 09:00 and 14:00.

The service is located in the St. Loman's Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) club in Mullingar town. The single storey premises consist of a pre-school room and a kitchen. The Astroturf play area adjacent to the premises is available for children's use for outdoor play.

Staffing

The deputy designated person in charge and two adults were working directly with children on the 7 June 2024. The registered provider arrived to the service shortly after the inspector's arrival and stayed for the closing meeting.

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.

Additional Information

The service had worked with a Quality Initiative service since the last inspection on the 13 September 2022.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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*

(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.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

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

(b)

The deputy person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider arrived to the service shortly after the inspector’s arrival.

Four staff files including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available in respect of three staff members.

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

(c)

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

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

The 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.

(6A)

An employee present was working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

Police vetting was not available for a staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff member has been in contact with police station requesting vetting to be sent out. Police station has responded and have posted vetting to staff members home address.

Photo proof of correspondence between staff and police attached.

The registered provider will ensure any staff members who have lived outside of Ireland more than 6 months that they have all necessary documentation on file prior to starting.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The noncompliance remains outstanding. The registered provider shall submit the police vetting to the Early Years Inspectorate upon receipt.

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.

(4) to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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.

(4)

There were twelve children attending the service supervised directly by four adults including the registered provider.

(8)(a)

Documentation indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(i)(k)

Correct documentation was put in place since the last inspection on the 13 September 2022.

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)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. The children were actively engaged in the morning activities that included tabletop activities, singing songs, free play and preparing for their upcoming graduation day.

A healthy snack was provided by the parents consisting of sandwiches, vegetables, yoghurts and fruit with water to drink. A little helper system was in place as two children gave out the lunches to their peers. Children sat at tables eating their snacks enjoying conversations and interactions with each other and staff. Children used the toilet independently and assistance was given by staff as required. Children were encouraged to be independent as they put on their coats in preparation for outdoor play.

Staff members were positive towards children as they used individual names, maintained eye contact during conversation and sitting with children during tabletop activities. Transition time was given by staff to children to alert them of the next activity occurring in the service. Small group work was observed as staff supported children at various play activities. Children requiring extra assistance were supported by the adults.

The service worked in partnership with parents, a verbal handover is given to parents and guardians at collection time. A short messaging system (SMS) is used to share the children's daily work and play activities with parents. An information board for parents is displayed on a daily basis for information sharing and activities the children have participated in. The child's learning journal depicting the child's play and work activities with child developmental observations were shared with parents.

The physical and material environment was laid out with low level tables and chairs and low-level shelving with materials easily accessible to the children. A home area, dolls house, construction area, sensory board and art easel were available to children. Age and stage appropriate materials were accessible on low level shelving. Children's artwork, collages and family photographs were displayed in the pre-school room.

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, or

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors which included toys and equipment for tabletop activities, creative, imaginary play, sensory and physical play. Equipment and materials to support outdoor play was stored indoors and brought out when the children went outdoors.

(b)

A small bench and low-level bed were available for children to rest if required.

(3)(a)

The astroturf area of the GAA grounds is used for outdoor play. The perimeter was secured with high-level fences and large gates. Staff set up play equipment on the astroturf on a daily basis. Children were observed to enjoy physical games during the inspection.

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 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:

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

A refrigerator was available in the kitchen for the storage of perishable goods.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service. An emergency care plan was in place for children with a defined medical condition. Upon discussion staff were familiar with the use of the auto adrenaline injector. (AAI).

Fire Safety:

Fire exits were free from obstruction in the service. A fire assembly point was located to the side of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The risk assessment for the use of the outdoor play area had not been completed since the 13 March 2024. It is acknowledged that the inspector observed safe practices to ensure children's safety when children were brought to the astroturf outdoor play area during the inspection.
2. The kitchen was open and accessible to children during the inspection. The mangers' checklist detailed that the kitchen was closed on the 7 June 2024. Upon the inspectors request a corrective action was taken and the kitchen door was locked by a staff member.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider has simplified the risk assessment paperwork to a tick the box system for staff to complete daily as staff found the older version very repetitive.
2. A new security latch on the door which is more user friendly for staff and easier for them to open and close. The registered provider will review policies and documents regularly and where needed update to more suitable process for tasks.
Regular meetings with staff to ensure all staff are aware of procedures.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. A risk assessment. 2. Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector addressed the non-compliances. The practice stated will be reviewed on the next TUSLA 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)
Two adults including the registered provider 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 the hallway of the service.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school 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)(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 24 May 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 the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 6 June 2023 and 27 February 2024.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in 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 under staff supervision at all times in the pre-school room, when using the sanitary accommodation and in the outdoor play area during the inspection.

At 12:00 approximately staff were observed to hand the children over to the parents at the entrance to the service.

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 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,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a)
The premises visually appears to be of sound and stable structure.
- (b)
The entrance to the pre-school service is accessible through the main door of the service. A doorbell system is used for parents and visitors to access to the service.
- (c)
The environmental temperature of the pre-school room was recorded at approximately 18.5 degrees Celsius. Natural lighting is supplemented by artificial lighting in the pre-school room. Windows are openable in the pre-school room and sanitary accommodation to allow for natural ventilation.
- (d)
The premises were visually clean.
- (e)
Suitable sanitary accommodation was available in the service to accommodate the children attending on a part time basis. Staff sanitary accommodation is provided upstairs.
The wash hand basins are plumbed with an instantaneous supply of hot and cold water. The water temperature recorded was 38.5 degrees Celsius.
The sanitary accommodation was stocked with a sufficient supply of liquid soap and paper hand towels. Pedal bins are in place in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste materials.

Non-Compliance Information

(d)

1. Two mats in the pre-school room required cleaning or replacement. One mat was located in the rest area and the other mat was located next to the low-level wooden shelving in the pre-school room.
2. The bin located next to the kitchen door was stained and required cleaning.
3. The walls next to kitchen door required painting.

(e)

The toilet in the sanitary accommodation was not flushing correctly and required repair.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d)

1. Mats have been replaced with wipeable nonslip mats which are easier to maintain.
2. Bin is cleaned every day with disinfected spray.
3. The painter is organised to come in over the summer holidays to paint entire classroom.

(e)

The plumber has been in and replaced toilet handle to ensure toilet flushes correctly.

The registered provider has allocated a staff member to ensure all equipment is regularly checked and replaced or repaired by qualified person.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic and written evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

(d)

Evidence submitted was reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and the following was noted;

- 1 & 2 The non-compliance has been addressed.
3. The non-compliance has not been addressed and remains outstanding. The practice stated will be assessed on the next inspection.

(e)

The non-compliance has been addressed.