

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC005		
Name of Service:	Ar Aghaidh Linn		
Address of Service:	Wood Field, Station Road, Blarney, Co Cork		
Eircode:	T23 YXK2		
Name of Registered Provider:	Mary McShortall		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	07/04/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick V94 XT5F		
Inspection undertaken by:	S O'Brien		
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	N/A
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Description of service

Ar Aghaidh Linn is an early year's sessional service and offers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service caters for children aged 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 9am to 12pm, Monday to Friday. The service is located in a converted ground floor unit in Blarney, Co Cork. The service consists of one main care room with sanitary facilities located beside the care room. The children have access to the outdoor play area of the sister childcare facility located nearby.

Staffing

The service employs three staff members. The registered provider is based in the service. On the day of inspection two staff members including the registered provider worked directly with the children. A staff member carrying out administration duties was also present and was available to provide relief cover if required.

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 and safety. 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 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, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise if required.

(b) The designated person in charge and the named person were on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service and all staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) Three staff files were reviewed including the registered provider.

(a) Two of the six references were from a past employer and were validated.

(b) Four of the six references were from a reputable source and were validated.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting disclosures were available for two staff members who had lived outside of the state for longer than six consecutive months.

(4) All three staff held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from level 5 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

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) There was adequate staff to care for the preschool children in attendance in the service during the inspection.

(3) On arrival to the service, there were 18 preschool children aged between 4 and 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 12 children's records were reviewed and all records were complete and contained the required information outlined from (a) to (i).

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

Basic needs

- Children's individual water bottles were available on a child height shelf in the care room.
- The staff were observed supporting the children with toileting when required.
- The children were observed washing their hands after toileting and before snack time.
- The children had an opportunity to play in the outdoor area available to the service which children were observed to enjoy.
- The children were observed freely moving around the care room and participating in different activities of choice.

Supporting relationships

- The staff were observed chatting to the children and ensuring they were at the child's level when communicating.
- The staff were observed sitting with the children during activities and at snack time. Snack time was a relaxed environment for children to sit and enjoy their food.
- Children's efforts were encouraged and acknowledged during activity time. This was observed by staff taking photographs.
- An electronic app was available for the communication with the parents and guardians.

Programme of activities

- Children were observed playing with stones of different textures. An old-fashioned weighing scales was available to the children to support them in their learning of different weights of stones. The staff gave

some string to the children to develop further learning where children were seen threading stones on the pieces of string. This supported children's gross motor and thinking skills.

- Children were observed partaking in a tabletop activity with whiteboard markers and cleanable activity sheets based on the theme of Easter. This supported children's fine motor skills.
- Jigsaws, plastic and magnetic constructions bricks were available, and children were observed playing in small groups.
- An art and craft table was available and children were observed making easter wreaths and colouring in easter eggs.
- The children had a large, grassed area to explore in the outdoor area with a sand box and loose parts to support the children's learning and development.

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:

- All toys and equipment were observed to be in good condition on the day of inspection.
- All cables were observed to be out of reach to children and in good condition during inspection.
- Blind cords were secured.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored safely and out of reach to children.

Infection control:

- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available to the children and staff in the sanitary area. Appropriate water temperatures for handwashing were recorded between 28.3°C and 28.8°C.
- The appropriate bins were available in the care room and sanitary facility.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were observed to be free from obstruction during inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. On arrival and during the inspection, the main entrance door to the service was not adequately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and restrict unauthorised access. This posed a safety risk to the

children. It is acknowledged that a sliding chain mechanism was observed to be fitted on the door but was not in use during the inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

Corrective Action

The registered provider stated that after the inspection was carried out a safety sign was printed and put on the door to remind all staff to place the safety chain on the door.

Preventive Action

The room leader will make sure that the sign will always be on the door and will check after staff leaving that the safety chain is on the door.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

Photographic evidence of the sign and safety chain was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The documented evidence submitted to the inspectorate was reviewed and has met the regulatory requirements.

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 inspector was informed by the staff that an electronic application was used to record the checking in and out of the preschool children. On review, it clearly indicated each preschool child was checked in and out on a daily basis.

(3)

(a) The inspector was asked to check in and out of the service on a visitor book which was approved by the administrative staff.

(b) A written record was available for the checking in and out of visitors on a daily basis.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured. The insurance policy commenced on 28 March 2025 and expired on 27 March 2026.