

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC034
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Name of Service:	Mary Geary's Childcare
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Address of Service:	IDA Business Park, Carrigtwohill, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T45 VY29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Oliver Sheehan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/08/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	89	PM	86
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast & L McGeeney
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Mary Geary's Childcare is a play based, full day care service, that also provides part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate children aged 0 to 6 years, along with school age childcare. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from 8.45am to 11.45am and from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks annually. Daily opening hours are from 7.45am to 6.00pm and the service is open throughout the year, with the exception of public holidays.

The childcare facility is situated in an industrial estate in Carrigtwohill, Co Cork and operates from a purpose built, two-storey premises. Within the main building, all 11 operational care rooms are located on the ground floor. Each care room has either adjoining or adjacent sanitary facilities for the children's use and an individual outdoor play area, which is directly accessible from the care room. A wider outdoor play environment is also available to the children, which consists of several varied interest areas. Two designated rooms and a large hall are provided for sleep. The ground floor also includes a reception area, a commercial kitchen, a sluice room, a laundry room and adult sanitary facilities. An office, a sensory room, a staff room, a meeting room, a staff sanitary facility and a training room are located on the first floor. An additional care room operates from an adjacent modular structure, with adjoining sanitary facilities. Eight of the 12 care rooms were in operation to accommodate early years children, on the day of the inspection. There is an onsite car park at the front of the premises, to facilitate the safe drop off and collection of children and staff parking.

Staffing

There are 69 staff employed in the service including the registered provider who, with members of the management team, act in the position of person in charge or deputy person in charge. There were 40 staff members employed to work directly with the early years children. Other staff included two recently appointed managers, two supervisors, catering staff, cleaning and maintenance staff, accounts and administration staff, bus drivers and staff who worked with the school age children.

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 registered provider, person in charge, deputy, 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) A designated person in charge was assigned to the service. The requirement for a deputy person in charge was also met, as four deputies were in place.
 - (b) The registered provider was available at the service when the inspectors arrived and remained on site for the inspection process. Review of the staff roster indicated that throughout the hours of operation, either the registered provider, person in charge, or one of the deputies was available.
 - (c) There had been changes to the management structure since the previous inspection. Two new managers had been employed and two staff had been promoted to the role of supervisor. There was a clear management

structure in place. The senior management team consisted of the registered provider, person in charge, three managers, two supervisors, an accounts manager and an assistant accounts manager. In addition, there were room leaders appointed to each care room.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the deputy, it was determined that 15 new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. Ten of these new staff members worked directly with the children. A total of 15 files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for eight staff members, whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal, were requested for review. A qualification was also reviewed in respect of a staff member, who had completed an award in Early Years Care and Education, since the last inspection.

- (a) Twenty-seven of the 30 required written and validated references were from past employers.
- (b) Three references had been obtained from sources other than previous employers and corresponding records of validation were in place.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 15 new staff. It was also noted that Garda vetting for an additional eight staff members, had been renewed before the expiry date. This was in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was deemed to be required for 10 of the adults and copies of the relevant documents were maintained on file, with suitable translations into English also available.

(4) Documentation on file confirmed that each of the 10 adults who were involved in the direct care and education of the children, held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or as recognised by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). Two new members of management also held 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.*
- (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) There was a sufficient number of adults observed to be available to the children throughout the period of inspection.

(2) The requirements of the regulation in relation to the minimum ratio of adults to children, were adhered to.

- During the morning of inspection, there were 20 adults working with the 89 children in attendance across the 8 care rooms, who were aged 11 months to 5 years.
- There were 86 children, aged 11 months to 5 years present in the afternoon and these children were under the direct care and supervision of 18 adults.

(8)

(a) According to the staff roster, the service was operated with at least two adults present at all times. A minimum of two adults were also on duty throughout the inspection process.

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 30 children’s enrolment forms were assessed and were noted to include the required information, as listed from (a) to (i).

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:

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

Compliance Information

(1)
(k) A sample of 20 accident and incident forms, which involved children across 5 of the care rooms, from January 2025 to present, were assessed. These records had been completed in full and included all of the required and relevant information.

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)

Physical and material environment:

- The children’s birthdays were represented within the care rooms, through colourful wall displays and photographs. Samples of the children’s artwork were also visible, which supported their sense of belonging.

- Low-level shelving units were in place to ensure that children could independently select and access play materials. Care rooms were appropriately furnished with child sized tables and chairs, which allowed children to comfortably participate in table top activities.
- The range of play resources on offer across the eight care rooms included the following:
 - Sound making toys, musical instruments and books, which encouraged singing and language development.
 - Play kitchens and utensils, dress up clothes, dolls, hand held vehicles and animal figures, which offered opportunities to engage in imaginary play.
 - Construction based materials, such as wooden blocks, plastic bricks, tool benches, magnets and connectable shapes.
 - Sensory toys and jigsaws, which encouraged fine motor skills.
 - Art and craft materials, which supported creativity and pre writing skills.
- Adult sized chairs were accessible in the younger care rooms, which assisted staff to comfort, feed and engage in playful interaction with children.
- In the outdoor play spaces directly accessible from the care rooms, children had the use of seesaws, slides, balls, a variety of ride on toys, kitchens and sand play. Such equipment promoted active play, gross motor development and exploration.
- The outdoor play area beyond the enclosed play spaces off each care room, provided the children with a wide range of experiences, choices and opportunities for exploration and risk taking. Some of the interest areas available included digging areas, mud kitchens, a natural wilderness with trees, shrubs, trail paths, a wooden bridge, a tyre pyramid, log seating and cubby spaces. There was also a playground, a sheltered play area, a tree house with slides and a large open field for games and activities.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff members demonstrated an awareness of the children's individual personalities and developmental needs and were responsive to their cues. For example, a child who had just woken from sleep was comforted by an adult, when brought back into the care room. This ensured that the child felt supported when transitioning to free play activities.
- It was observed that the parent of a younger child, who was settling into the service, was welcomed into their child's care room. During subsequent discussion with the parent, a staff member sought to learn

about the child's interests, with a view to assisting the child to adapt to and participate in their new environment.

- In some of the care rooms, the connecting internal doors were opened back, which allowed children to play and communicate with their peers and to enjoy a wider variety of play experiences. Similarly, the outdoor play space that adjoined each care room was shared with the neighbouring room. It was also observed that the doors, which provided direct access to these smaller outdoor areas, remained open for extended periods, which meant that children could move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. This in turn contributed to a notably calm and engaging atmosphere.

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:

- There was a magnetic lock in place on the entrance door to the childcare facility. Exit through the same door was via a door release button, at adult height. This reduced the risk of a child exiting unsupervised.
- Secure enclosures of fencing and gates were provided in the outdoor play areas, that were directly accessible from each of the care rooms.
- Suitable tension devices were in place to secure blind cords.
- There were no trailing cables or flexes within the children's reach.
- Cleaning agents were stored at a height that was inaccessible by children.
- Visibility strips were fitted to glass panel doors at child height.

Infection control:

- Suitable handwashing and drying facilities were available in the sanitary facilities, including warm water, liquid soap and disposable paper towels.
- Staff were observed to sanitise tables and swept the floor, after the children had finished eating.
- There was individual storage in place for the children's personal belongings; wall hooks were provided for their coats and outdoor clothing, while shoes were stored on shelves.

Administration of medication:

- Prescribed medication that was held at the service had been labelled and was in-date.

Safe sleep:

- While occupied by sleeping children aged over 12 months, the air temperature of the Caterpillar sleep room fell within the required range of 18°C to 22°C. A temperature reading of 21.5°C was noted. The large hall, which was used to facilitate a scheduled rest period in the afternoon, had a recorded air temperature of 22°C.
- The ten-minute interval checks of sleeping children, that were carried out by staff members, had been recorded on an online application and were available for review. These included monitoring of each child's breathing, colour and position.

Fire safety:

- Fire exit signage was illuminated.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

The following increased the risk of cross infection:

1. In two of the care rooms, children were not observed to wash their hands after using the sanitary facilities and were not reminded to do so by an adult. In another care room, a child was also noted to leave the sanitary facility without washing their hands, however an adult did remind the child to wash their hands, when prompted by the inspector.
2. Many of the cot mattresses were not waterproof, or were not fitted with waterproof mattress protectors, as required to reduce the risk of cross infection. It is acknowledged that a receipt for the purchase of waterproof mattress protectors was submitted the day after the inspection.
3. The cosy area within the Mighty Oaks room was not maintained in a clean condition. The large cushion on the wooden bed required laundering and there was an accumulation of dust visible on the umbrella hanging overhead. During discussion with a staff member, the inspector was advised that a record of laundering for the cushion was unavailable.
4. In the sanitary facility adjoining the Little Acorns room and in the sanitary facility adjoining the Mighty Oaks room, the foot pedal operated bins were broken. Contact with the lids was therefore required to open the bins and dispose of paper towelling. It is acknowledged that one of the bins was replaced after this was brought to the attention of staff and that a receipt for the purchase of additional bins, was forwarded following the inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

1. The written reply outlined that an email was circulated to all care rooms highlighting the importance of handwashing. Discussion also took place at a follow up meeting, whereby staff were asked to collaborate with management in relation to ideas and resources which could be implemented. The hygiene policy was also circulated to all staff members. As a preventive measure, the service have added general hygiene practices to the curriculum plan. This will ensure that all rooms are implementing such practices regularly throughout the year.
2. As noted in the report, the required waterproof mattress protectors were purchased and are now in use in both the Baby and Toddler sleep areas. A note has been made of the required bedding and this will be used going forward. A check will be conducted each term, to ensure that this is maintained.
3. The service has a laundry room rota. This will be extended further to allow for staff signatures, to ensure that all rooms are regularly maintaining the soft furnishings within the rooms. A sign in sheet is available on the door of the laundry room and all staff will be able to sign in on their designated day. This record will be filed within the service.
4. The service has purchased a number of bins to replace the ones that were broken. As part of the curriculum, staff and children will be encouraged to be more mindful and respectful of the environment and equipment. Staff will be asked to risk assess and monitor the equipment within the rooms and outdoor areas each month and to report any damaged equipment to management.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

1. A copy of the service's general handwashing policy.
2. A receipt for the purchase of waterproof mattress protectors.
3. A copy of the service's laundry room rota.
4. A receipt for the purchase of additional bins.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted have adequately addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service held adequate insurance cover to provide full day care and the policy was valid until 28 February 2026.