

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018KE510
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Name of Service:	Helping Hands Pre-School and Afterschool Care
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Address of Service:	Scoil Mhuire, Ballymore Eustace, Naas, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 PF86
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Gallagher, Nicola Byrne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child & Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Ballymore Eustace Road Naas Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher, R. Flynn
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	Not applicable.
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Description of service

Helping Hands Pre-school and Afterschool Care is a privately owned sessional service which provides care and education to children aged between 2-6 years and also operates a school age service. Opening hours are Monday to Friday from 09:00-12:00hrs for 38 weeks of the pre-school year. The service is located in Ballymore Eustace primary school and operates from one large classroom in the building. A secure well equipped play area with an outdoor classroom is located to the front of the school where the children spend the majority of their time as there is an emphasis on outdoor play and learning.

Staffing

Five adults, including the registered providers, are employed in the service and all were present and working directly with the children on the day of inspection.

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. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under;

- Regulation 9 (1) (a) (b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4) - Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1) and (3) – Staffing Levels
- Regulation 15 – Record of a Preschool Child

- Regulation 22 – Food and Drink
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child
- Regulation 25 (1), (2) (a) (b) – First Aid
- Regulation 27 – Supervision

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 providers, 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

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

The records of five staff members employed, including the registered providers were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and verified past employer references or verified references from a reputable source other than a past employer were available in respect of each of the five adults whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for five employed staff members.

The service also 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 adult had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)
Five adults employed and working directly with the children held a qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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 were 19 children attending the service being supervised directly by 5 staff members during the morning.

(3)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the inspection as specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6.

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 records were reviewed. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above regulation for all the records reviewed.

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 service promoted healthy eating and encouraged parents to provide healthy snacks for their child. The staff advised they chat to the children on a regular basis regarding healthy eating and healthy food choices. Foods provided for snack included sandwiches with various healthy fillings, fresh fruit pieces, crackers, pasta and yoghurts or fromage frais.

Children had their own drinks of water that were available in the outdoor area; fresh drinking water was available in the main school building. The staff members sat with the children during snack time making it an enjoyable and social occasion for the children.

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 main entrance door to the primary school was secure and controlled by the school staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the school building and the pre-school classroom within. The pre-school room door was secured on the inside with a high-level hook locking mechanism to ensure children did not exit the room unnoticed. The outdoor play area to the front of the school was fully enclosed by a high-level metal fence and gates; the gates are secured with high level locks to ensure the safety of the children when in this area.

No hazards were observed indoors or in the outdoor area, daily risk assessments were completed for these areas and were electronically recorded, as observed, on the handheld device used.

Staff members advised the inspectors they immediately cut/halved any food items observed provided in lunch boxes that had the potential to cause a choking risk to a child.

Infection Control:

Handwashing routines had been well established and children were observed washing their hands before having their morning snack. Thermostatically controlled hot water, paper hand towel, dispensed hygienically from a wall mounted dispenser and liquid soap were available for hygienic hand washing practices. Foot pedal operated bins were in place for the hygienic disposal of used paper towel, tissues and any waste.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. No child attending the service required continuous medication or emergency medication; this was confirmed by the registered provider. Staff were also familiar with the safe practice to administer medication and recording of same should the need arise; medicine was safely stored out of reach of children in the pre-school room.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills were carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed and clearly signed.

Outing:

Outings do not take place from the service; this was confirmed by the staff members.

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)

Staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and paediatric first aid and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)

The first aid equipment was safely stored, in conspicuous positions indoors and in the outdoor area.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending 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 children were observed being supervised at all times in the outdoor play area where they spent the session. The staff members positioned themselves in three specific areas/zones to ensure the children were always within their sight and hearing. When the children were being brought into the main school building to use the sanitary facilities before snack time, they were escorted in groups by two staff members at that time. The children were also supervised with hand washing as observed.