

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019CE001				
Name of Service:	Bears Den				
Address of Service:	Clonlia, Clonmoney West, Bunratty, Co. Clare				
Eircode:	V14N228				
Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian McGahon				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	27/02/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>11</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	11	PM	N/A
AM	11	PM	N/A		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	<p>Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare</p>				
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy				
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

Description of service

Bears Den was established in 2019, as an independently operated childcare facility in Bunratty, County Clare. A play-based programme of care and education is facilitated Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 12:00. The sessional childcare facility is located in one open plan room adjacent to the owners domestic dwelling. An outdoor play area is located to the side and rear of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and works directly with the children and provides an administrative role. On the 27 February 2025 the registered provider and one adult worked directly with the children in attendance.

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 focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (3) (8)(a)

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

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

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

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 28- Insurance

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report. 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. 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, the staff member 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,
- (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 person in charge and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and the deputy were available during the inspection.

(2)

Two files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adult working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

Four written and validated references from past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.

- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the two adults employed by the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)
International police vetting was not required in respect of the two adults working in the service, who had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months.
- (4)
The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications at Level 6 and Level 7 on the National Framework of 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.*
- (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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
During the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.

(3)

On the 27 February 2025 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Two adults cared for the eleven children attending the sessional service.

(8)(a)

During the inspection more than two adults were available in the service at all times.

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

(1)(a)

The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials and equipment having regard to the age and developmental stage of the children. One care room was in operation during the inspection.

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a caring manner and positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions. The adults praised and encouraged the children, conversed with the children at their level, used soft tones of voice and responded promptly to their cues for assistance and comfort. The children were encouraged to be independent in play and learning, whilst caring for their belongings, at mealtime and whilst using the toilet. The adults supervised and treated the children in a sensitive manner during toileting. Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care and prompted to wipe their noses at appropriate intervals.

The adults supported the children's choice of individual and group engagement in activities. The children were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and learning activities. The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor engaging in play-based activities and the adults supported the child in individual and group activities. Children's engagement in activities and developmental progression was captured in their individual

learning journals. Mealtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable occasion. Parents provided healthy and nutritious food and beverages for the children.

Physical and Material Environment:

The care room was bright, decorated with colourful visual learning aids and artwork and was well-resourced. The room was laid out to enable the children to freely access the equipment and materials. Throughout the day, the children were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and educational activities and observed to be fully engaged as they transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environments. A variety of stimulating opportunities for play and learning activities were available and accessible in the indoor and outdoor environments with defined areas of interest. The care room was appropriately resourced with a home corner, a dolls house, a construction section and an art/writing station. Accessible shelving accommodated a range of games, puzzles, shape sorters and pretend play equipment. A floor surface with synthetic grass material was used for individual and group activities where the children engaged in constructive play with blocks, car tracks, a treasure chest and ships. Tabletop activities included manipulative play with straws and connectors and sticker books. Seating and soft furnishings with adjacent reading materials were available for use by the children to rest and relax.

The outdoor play area located to the side and rear of the service was accessible from the care room. The play area was enclosed and was partially covered to support play in all weather conditions. The children wore all weather clothing and footwear and had access to an activity unit, a pretend playhouse, a mud kitchen, sensory play tables, a slide and swings. A box stored a range of action figures and vehicles which could be accessed by the children. Low level benches were available for use by the children. The children were observed to thoroughly enjoy their time in the indoor and outdoor environments.

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 entrance to the service was secured to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility.
- The outdoor area was secured with fencing, walls and gates to protect the children within.
- The children were signed in and out on arrival and departure to the service and were supervised at all times during the inspection.
- Storage facilities were secured and inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Completed cleaning schedules were available demonstrating measures taken by staff to clean and maintain the service.
- The sanitary facility was equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, after using the toilet and on return from outdoor play and before mealtime.
- The adults promoted effective coughing and nasal care etiquette with the children.
- The infectious disease exclusion criteria were displayed on the parents notice board.
- The children's perishable food items were stored in a refrigerator in each care room and the kitchen.
- The children's personal belongings were stored individually on a rail.

Administration of Medication:

- The registered provider stated that medication is not routinely administered in the service.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit routes and passageways were clear from obstruction.

- The fire assembly point was readily identifiable. A fire action notice was displayed at the fire exit points in the building.
- The service demonstrated evidence of completing monthly fire drills to prepare the service to respond in the event of fire.

Outing:

- The registered provider stated that outings are not undertaken by the service.

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 had a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The staff roster indicated that an adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available in the service at all times.

(2)(a)
A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in the care room.

(b)
The first aid box was available in the care room for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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 firefighting 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)

Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 22 January 2025.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system took place 01 November 2024.

(4)

A fire action notice was displayed demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for eleven preschool children. The insurance policy for the sessional service is valid until the 27 March 2025.