

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019LK001
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Name of Service:	The Old School ABC
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Address of Service:	Bohermore, Ballysimon, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 EF60
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ciara Sheehy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	12
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Offices, 2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

The Old School ABC is a full day childcare service situated within a renovated historic schoolhouse on the Bohermore National School campus in Ballysimon, County Limerick. The service hosts morning preschool sessions throughout the week, with an additional part-time afternoon option available until 1.45pm for younger children. Older school-aged children are also catered for with a dedicated afternoon service. Learning takes place across two specialised and fully equipped classrooms featuring adjacent sanitary facilities. Students also benefit from a nearby sensory room and extensive outdoor areas, including the main school playground, a protected outdoor learning space, and a substantial natural garden at the back of the property.

Staffing

The registered provider is the principal of Bohermore primary school. There is a designated person in charge appointed to manage the preschool service. Seven additional staff are also employed to work at the school. Each staff working at the service holds an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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, 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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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 had appointed a designated person in charge to manage the service. There was a named person who could deputise if required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection and staff rosters indicated that there was at all times a person identified to manage the service each day.

(2)(a) There were written references, from past employers, available in respect of all staff employed at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, references from an alternative source such as schools and colleges were provided.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were available for all 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 on file for 3 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) All staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. A staff member present had completed the LINC training, a programme designed to enhance the inclusion of all children in Early Learning and Care settings.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there were at all times above the required adult child ratio available at the service.
- (2) On the day of the inspection there were 23 preschool children and 7 staff in attendance for the morning sessional service. For the afternoon parttime service there were 12 preschool children and 6 staff in attendance. The adult/child ratio was correct.

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:

The service maintained a healthy eating policy, and parents were advised to provide nutritious snacks for break times. A second meal offering a fruit platter was provided for children remaining at the service until 1:45 p.m. Children had continuous access to drinking water, with individual water bottles readily available throughout the day.

Children were permitted unrestricted access to the toilets adjacent to preschool room one and remained supervised while using these facilities.

A change of clothes was available for all children. Additionally, the service provided outdoor warm clothing and wellingtons to facilitate the significant amount of time children spent outdoors daily.

Tissues and wipes remained accessible to the children, and waste was disposed of in foot pedal operated, lidded bins.

The service provided soft furnishings to create a rest area, and a sensory room that offered a quiet space away from active play areas.

Children were afforded opportunities to move freely and explore both indoor and outdoor environments.

Facilities outside included a sectioned area of the school yard, a sheltered outdoor classroom, and a natural garden for planting and gardening,

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The service functioned across 2 preschool rooms. The primary classroom consisted of a spacious environment featuring various well-resourced interest areas tailored to child development, including zones for construction, imaginative play, arts and crafts, and a library, alongside a designated relaxation space with soft furnishings. All educational materials and play equipment were maintained on low-level, open shelving to ensure high visibility and independent access for the children. Supplementary storage was provided on higher shelving to facilitate the regular rotation of resources. Appropriately sized furniture was utilised for both structured tabletop activities and communal mealtimes.

Individual coat hooks and storage compartments were clearly labelled for each child's belongings to encourage independence and organisational skills. Seasonal artwork was displayed prominently throughout the room. A second, smaller preschool room was utilised to support individual focused work and small group interactions.

The outdoor provision included access to the main school playground and a garden situated at the rear of the property. A sheltered outdoor classroom ensured that children could engage with the external environment regularly, regardless of weather conditions. The outdoor equipment and materials were specifically chosen to foster exploration and provide unique learning experiences, such as gardening and nature-based lessons.

Non-Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

1. The service did not provide a substantial hot meal for children enrolled in the full-day care service. To comply with established nutritional standards for extended hours, a daily hot meal must be served to children attending during extended hours. There was no documented menu plan available to demonstrate how the service intended to meet these nutritional requirements.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service developed a revised menu plan which included an option of a freshly prepared meal for the children who attend for the extended hours each day.

Supporting documentation submitted

A sample menu plan was forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and the evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified has been adequately addressed.

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) There were 2 staff members working at the service that had the required first aid responder training completed. All certificates were in date.

(2)(a) A first aid box stocked with all the necessary materials was stored in an easily accessible location in the preschool.

(b) The first aid box was at all times available to the children both when indoors and outdoors at the 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Records were available to show that fire drills were carried out monthly. The most recent fire drill took place on the 23rd of March 2026.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises with the most recent service having been completed on the 5th of September 2025.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had a current insurance certificate which outlined that adequate insurance was available for 28 preschool children to attend the service. The insurance cover commenced on the 28th of March 2026 and expired on the 27th of March 2027.

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 building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises indoors appeared safe and secured. The gate to enter and leave the school grounds had a restrictive lock in place. The outdoor area used by the preschool children had a timber railing and gate surrounding the space.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, and wash hand basins in the service for the number of children and adults in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (b)
- The storage of cleaning materials within the sanitary facilities was observed during the inspection. This practice presents a significant risk of cross-contamination and compromises infection control protocols. Sanitary areas are high-risk environments for the spread of pathogens, and storing cleaning equipment in these spaces can inadvertently facilitate the transfer of bacteria and viruses to other parts of the premises. All cleaning equipment and agents were not stored in a dedicated, secure location away from children and hygiene-sensitive areas to ensure safety. It is essential that sanitary accommodations are used exclusively for their intended purpose and are not utilised for general storage
- (c)
- Evidence of mould was observed on the painted surfaces within the disability access bathroom. Mould growth compromises indoor air quality and can trigger respiratory issues for children.
- (d)
- The timber flooring in both preschool rooms was found to be in a state of disrepair, characterised by excessive wear and visible gaps between floorboards and at the wall junctions. This poses a risk to health and hygiene. Compromised flooring surfaces create gaps that trap dust, dirt, and organic matter, facilitating the growth of bacteria and making effective cleaning impossible. These structural defects present potential trip hazards and could lead to splinter injuries for children playing on the floor. It is acknowledged that remedial work to replace the flooring commenced on the afternoon of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (b) All cleaning equipment and materials were removed from the sanitary accommodation areas, and a new designated storage facility was created in an alternative location. These materials were safely stored out of reach of children and away from hygiene sensitive areas.
- (c) Wall areas where there was evidence of mould were treated and all areas were repainted. Regular checks throughout the premises were scheduled to ensure all areas were checked for evidence of mould or dampness.
- (d) New floor covering was applied to both Preschool rooms in the premises.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of all the aforementioned changes were forwarded to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and the evidence submitted. The noncompliance's identified have been adequately addressed.