

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2019MO002
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Imagination Station
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Rooms 9 & 10 St. Angela's N.S., The Lawn, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F23 YD79
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Sinead Cooney
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	03/12/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	12	PM	No.
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Child and Family Agency. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor St Mary's HQ, Castlebar, Co Mayo. F23HP58
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	B Lavin
<b>Title:</b>	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).	

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

Imagination Station is a privately owned and operated service located in Castlebar, county Mayo. It provides sessional services for children aged between 2 and 6 years of age from 09:00 to 12:00 from Monday to Friday. A school aged service is also provided. The premises is in a designated section of St. Angela's national school and includes a large playroom with sanitary accommodation. There is an enclosed outdoor play area to the front of the preschool premises.

### Staffing

There are 7 staff including the registered provider, who works directly with the children, employed to work in the service. There was also a student on work placement on the day of the 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 and the health, welfare and development of child. 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.*

*(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 there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the registered provider and the person in charge were on the premises and facilitated the inspection.
- (2) Following a review of the service files and discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that there were 6 members of staff and 1 student employed in the service.
- (a) There were 12 of the required 14 written and appropriately validated references available from their most recent employer.
- (b) There were 2 written and appropriately validated references available from a source other than recent employer for 2 adults working in the service.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all the adults working in the service. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Police vetting disclosures were available for the 1 adult working in the service who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over 6 months.
- (4) The 6 staff members working directly with the children had attained major awards in early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

### 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 4 adults working directly with children on the day of inspection.
- The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.
- There were 12 children attending the service on a sessional basis with 4 staff members.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained.

### 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

- Drinking water was available to all children in individual beakers throughout the day.
- Children were observed eating their snack provided by the parents/guardians which consisted of fruit, yogurt, cheese, crackers, chopped vegetables, wraps and sandwiches. Children were supported during mealtimes with opening food items when needed. Independence was encouraged with self-help skills.
- Children sat at tables and chairs which were appropriate for their height and/or stage of development.
- The staff were observed sitting at the child's level and chatted in a respectful manner.
- The privacy and dignity of each child was respected during toileting.

- Rest facilities were available in the care room in the form of large couches in a cosy library corner and children were observed spending time in this area for periods of rest throughout the day.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions to sharing toys, equipment and turn taking.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- Children had access to a secure outdoor play area accessed directly from the playroom. Children wore appropriate outdoor clothing and were observed playing on ride on bikes, playing with sand and with a large mud kitchen in a covered section of the outdoor area.

### Supporting relationships

- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.
- The staff were actively involved in children's play, where appropriate initiating games and joining in when invited to by children.
- The staff behaved in a way that created a positive atmosphere, having frequent social conversations, joint laughter, showing affection and group story time.
- The staff listened to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts and experiences both verbally and non-verbally- by reading children's cues, gestures and body language.
- Soft tones were used with the children, along with the child's individual name, getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- Staff guided and supported children who needed more help. Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion, for example giving one to one attention, providing extra support at times of transition and moving at the child's pace. Individual support plans were in place for children who required additional support.
- Staff communicated with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life and any other concerns at drop off and collection times, by phone and by text.
- The staff were observed supporting and interacting with the children in a variety of ways- discussing, modelling and initiating games and activities.

- Small group play opportunities were encouraged and facilitated within the care room. This provided staff with opportunities to get to know the children better, quieter play time and a sensory rich experience.

### Physical and material environment

- The children were observed at free play, connecting, stacking, building, linking and doing puzzles and tabletop activities. The children played with transport vehicles, a toy kitchen, soft toys, farm toys, baby dolls, dinosaurs and dress up.
- Outside play was encouraged and children were observed to play freely. The children had the opportunity to develop their gross motor skills on ride on toys. Sensory play and imaginative play were provided for with playhouses, a mud kitchen and a sandbox.
- Visual aids in the form of picture and word reminders and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning. Displayed on the walls were themes including family, birthdays, colours, numbers, circle of friends, communication themes and wellbeing.

### Programme of activities

- There was a varied programme of activities offered to the children daily. This programme was developed with both short term and long-term goals. A winter theme was in place within the room with a focus on developing literacy skills through songs, writing letters and arts and crafts. Previous themes included autumn and nature walks, leaf painting, playdough fun and messy play.
- Children's choice was included in the development of play activities and emerging interests was developed within the care room. The children were given choice in participating in larger group activities or to play in smaller groups. Children had a choice in the games they participated in. Staff members were observed to create play opportunities such as arts and crafts and board games following the lead of children's own ideas.

## 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.*
- (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) A written record was available to demonstrate monthly fire drills completed in the service.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke detection system with the last annual service 09/10/2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the playroom and in the entrance lobby.