

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020CW002SA
Name of School Age Service:	Askea Community Childcare Centre
Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Bernadette Greene
Address of School Age Service:	Brownshill Road, Askea, Co Carlow.
Eircode:	R93 K152

Dates of Inspection:	12 March 2025			
Number of school age children present during inspection:	AM	N/A	PM	48
Registration status:	Registered			
Conditions (if applicable):	Not Applicable			

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Primary Care Centre, Castle Park, Arklow, Co Wicklow
Inspection undertaken by:	L O' Connor
Title:	Early years inspector

Authority to Inspect

Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:

Askea Community Childcare Centre is located on the outskirts of Carlow town. It operates from purposed built premises, and it is registered to cater for up to 60 school aged children aged 4 to 15 years old. During term time, the service operates from 2pm to 6pm Monday to Thursday and until 5pm on a Friday. Outside term time, the service operates from 7.30am – 6pm.

	The children have access to three care rooms on the first floor of the building. The school-aged children are provided with an outdoor area located within the Askea Girls Primary School premises which is adjoining the service premises. The service also runs a pre-school service which is registered separately.
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Staffing:	There are eight adults employed to work directly with school aged children, including the person in charge. This does not include the registered provider who does not work directly with the children. There are five ancillary staff, including cooks and cleaners, who are present while the school age service is in operation. On the day of inspection, there were seven adults working directly with the school aged children. The service manager was also available to provide support if required.
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Additional Information:	This inspection was triggered by information received by the Early Years Inspectorate.
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Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years' service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children, and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 commence.

The Inspectorate reserves the right to edit CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 8(1)(2): Vetting disclosures;
- Regulation 9(1)(2)(4): Staffing levels;
- Regulation 12: Insurance;
- Regulation 13: Complaints
- Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

Conclusion and follow up actions:

The service was complaint with the regulations assessed and there are no follow up actions from this inspection.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.

(2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1) (a)(b)(c)

Documentation relating to fourteen staff files was reviewed. Twenty-eight references were available for the staff members, and these were validated as required. The required Garda vetting disclosures were available for all of the staff members. It was demonstrated that the service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Police vetting was required for four staff members, and it was available for review.

(2)

The above procedures were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- (4) A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(2)(4)

The adult to child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. At 3pm, there were seven adults working directly with forty-eight school age children in the service. The following was in place;

- Four adults were working with 19 children aged 5 to 7 years.
- Two adults were working with 20 school age children aged 8 to 10 years.
- One adult was working with nine school age children aged 11 to 12 years.

There was an adequate number of adults working with the children and additional support was available from the person in charge if required. In discussion, it was outlined that a part of the daily routine for all of the school age children was to go to the outdoor area. The staff members outlined that while outdoors, if a child requested to go indoors or if a child was unwell, that a staff member would bring them inside to the care room. The inspector observed that there was an adequate number of adults present on the day of inspection to facilitate this practice.

Throughout the inspection, the children were appropriately supervised by the staff members. They were observed by the inspector to work together to ensure that the children were, at all times, appropriately supervised. The adults were observed to supervise the children by communicating with each other and remaining within a reasonable distance to the group of children.

At 4.30pm, there were six adults in the outdoor area with 40 school age children. The staff members outlined that while outdoors the school age children are viewed as one group and the staff members supervise all of the children. During this time, they observed the children from a reasonable distance and altered supervision strategies as required. For example, one staff member was observing a group of 8 children who were playing football, another staff member was with a group of seven children launching an air rocket toy into the air. The other four staff members were pro-actively moving around the outdoor area observing the children. For example, three children were playing away from the main area. One staff member was observed to supervise the children through sight from a reasonable distance. These supervision strategies were reflective of the service's outdoor play policy which stated that staff are clear on their responsibilities to ensure that children are appropriately supervised while outdoors.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement met

The service was insured for 60 school age children to attend at any one time. The policy was dated from 15 March 2024 to 14 March 2025.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

There was a three-week menu displayed in the hallway and the food listed was reflective of the food provided to the children on the day of inspection. The meals and snacks provided to the children were prepared and cooked by the service. The children were provided with baked garlic potatoes with cheese and broccoli. The evening snack was scones with butter and pears. The staff members outlined that children are offered an alternative if they do not want the hot meal and discussed that children are offered the evening snack or the children can eat additional food which they may take into the service from home. The inspector observed that all children were offered the hot meal by the staff members. For the children who did not the hot meal, the evening snack or food brought from home was suggested. It was highlighted by the staff members that additional snacks were available for the children which included fruit and crackers. Staff members outlined that children would usually eat their snack in the outdoor area but that it was available to eat at any time. The evening snack for each of the three groups was observed to brought to outdoor area.

Information about children's food preferences and dietary restrictions was recorded and available to staff. There were individual plans developed for children which detailed suitable food(s) for the child and arrangements in place. Through discussion, staff members were familiar with these requirements and the individual plans in place for children. The service communicated the practices regarding specific dietary requirements and the procedures in place within the service to parents and guardians through the service's school age pack on enrolment.

The service's curriculum policy outlined that the materials and equipment within the service are suitable for the age of the children. The equipment observed by the inspector was appropriate for the age and stage of development of each of the groups of children. For example, there was a

variance of the heights of the tables and chairs provided for the children within school age room 3 which catered for children aged 5 to 7 years and school age room 2 which catered for children aged 11 to 12 years. In addition, the children were provided with varying materials suitable for their age within each of the three care rooms. For example, varying arts and craft materials, games, books, and building blocks.

In discussion with the staff members, it was highlighted that while similar, the routine within each of the care rooms was adapted to the age and stage of development of the group of children. The staff members outlined that there was flexibility on the routine of the room as it considered the needs, preferences and interests of the children on the day. For example, the staff member in School Age Room 3 [4-7 years] outlined that the children planned to go outdoors at 4pm. On the day of inspection, at this time the children were immersed in free play and dancing to music. The children from school age room 3 were observed to join the other two groups outdoors at 4.25pm. This practice was reflective of the service's curriculum policy which outlined that the curriculum is flexible and responds to children's emerging interests and capabilities. A flexible routine which recognises the interests of the children will support children's sense of independence and choice.

The service's outdoor play policy stated that the outdoor environment is an essential part of the daily curriculum. The staff members discussed how the children enjoyed being outdoors each day as it allowed them to move, run and play games with their peers. The children were provided with an enclosed outdoor space located within the adjoining national school which could be accessed from the rear of the service. At 4.45pm, the children were observed to be fully engaged in play, conversation and games in varying parts of the outdoor area. This was supported through the children being dressed appropriately for the weather which included hats, scarfs and coats. The outdoor environment provided the children with varying opportunities for play and movement. For example,

- A grass area which was on the outskirts of the playground;
- A climbing frame, balance beam, rotating seats and a play house;
- A tarmacadam area with basketball hoops.

The staff members working with the school age children were familiar with the service's policies and procedures. This included the policies and procedures relating to healthy eating, outdoor play, illness, partnership with parents and staff training. In discussion, staff members described the procedure for a school age child with a temperature and/or child who is unwell. The staff members outlined if the child was outdoors, the child would be brought into a care room. The procedures described by the staff members was reflective of the service's illness policy.

The service's curriculum policy stated that staff will develop positive and ongoing relationships with parents/guardians. Staff members outlined that the parents and/or guardians collect the children from the outdoor area. They highlighted that collection and drop off times were an important aspect of building relationships between the service and the child's parent and/or guardian. In discussion with the person in charge and staff members, the service promoted partnership with parents and/or guardians through varying measures. This included emails to provide the services policies, updates or information. The service also provided a school age services pack for parents on enrolment and monthly newsletters.

The service's staff training policy outlined that staff members received training as part of their induction and also ongoing training was provided to staff members within the service. Training records were available to demonstrate that staff members had engaged in continuous professional development. Documentation demonstrated that the staff members working directly with the school age children had read the service's policies and procedures as part of their induction. The person in charge outlined that staff members continually re-engaged with service's policies through staff meetings and training. The service's policy outlined that staff members received regular supervision meetings. Documentation was available to review which demonstrated this practice of support and supervision meetings with staff members.

Regulation 13: Complaints

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies—

(a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,

(b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and

(c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

(2) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that—

(a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the school age service, and (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall—

(a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and

(b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1) (2) (3)

A complaints policy was available within the service for a person to make a complaint. The policy detailed the procedures to follow, including the assigned person responsible for dealing with a complaint, how complaints are dealt with and communication strategies in the case where a complaint is made to the service.

A record was available for review to demonstrate that the registered provider followed the procedures as set out in the services complaints policy.