

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020GY005		
Name of Service:	Sonas Early Years Centre		
Address of Service:	Unit 11, Galway Retail Centre, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway		
Eircode:	H91 H6CY		
Name of Registered Provider:	Theresa Murphy		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	18/02/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	70	PM 68
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla-Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulations Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A – (1st Floor-Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan and E. Friel.		
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		

Description of service

This purpose-built early years' service is based in an urban area of Galway city, in Knocknacarra, known as Galway retail centre. The service operating hours are 08.00 to 18.00, from Monday to Friday. While the service is registered to accommodate children aged 0 - 6 years, it is currently accommodating children from 1 - 6 years. The service caters for full day-care, part-time care, Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) and sessional pre-school care programmes from 09.00 to 12.00. This ground floor premises has a total of five playrooms, the Buttercups room, Bluebells room, Daisy's room, Daffodils room and the Sunflower room. The service has a designated kitchen where food is prepared and cooked on site by the service cook. There is also a designated sleep room for children under two years of age and a staff room. To the rear of the premises children have access to two outdoor play areas based on the age and stage of development of the children.

Staffing

There is a total of 19 adults employed in the service including the area manager, manager and cook. In addition, there were two students on placement. The registered provider does not work directly with children.

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.

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.

Additional Information

On the 27th of June 2025, the following conditions were attached under regulations 9, 19 and 23 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

- Ensure that all staff members are appropriately supervised and provided with information and training in relation to policies, procedures and statements of the service.
- Ensure that no practices that are emotionally or physically harmful are carried out in respect of a preschool child whilst attending the service.
- Ensure that sleep checks are conducted at 10- minute intervals on all sleeping children as per the service policy.

On Inspection there was evidence that the conditions attached to the registration of this service were complied with. Following same, the National Registration Enforcement Panel (NREP) determined that the attached conditions were met and are removed. This service has now been de-escalated from NREP

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the area manager, 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model,

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service had a person in charge and a designated person was available to deputise, if required. In addition, the area manager arrived within a short period of commencement of the start of the inspection.

- (b) The staff roster indicated that either the manager or the deputy was available while the early years children were on the premises.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service which was displayed in the reception area, which detailed the staff names and their associated care rooms.
Since the last inspection on the 19th of November 2025, five new adults had commenced working in the service and two students. Two other adult files were reviewed for garda vetting that had exceeded the three year requirement since the last inspection.

Therefore, recruitment records in relation to these seven new adults were reviewed:

- (2)(a) Six of the 14 required written and validated references were from past employers.
 - (b) Eight of the 14 required written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the five new adults working in the service, two students and two adults whose garda vetting had been renewed demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
 - (a) International police vetting was available for six adults working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months.
- (4) There was evidence that five of the new adults employed to work directly with children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education between a level 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent.
- (6)(A) One adult was employed in the service under the Access and Inclusion Model.
- (7)(a) New adults working in the service stated and documentation was available that evidenced that all five adults and two students had received induction training. This included all policies, procedures and statements of the service, each staff members role in the service, the governance structure, grievance and disciplinary procedures, code of behaviour and mandatory training required. The new adults stated that mentoring and induction was provided in various services, owned by the registered provider, prior to working directly with children. Evidence was provided of recent supervision for one adult which had taken place within an eight-week period which was in line with the service policy.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the inspection day.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to. There were 15 adults working directly with 70 children in the morning and 68 children in the afternoon.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(16)(1)

- (i) The staff roster was available for the week of inspection, 16th of February 2026, which had the name of each staff member working in the service and those rostered off for each day recorded. This included the kitchen, cover staff and management. A separate roster was available for adult's breaks.

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

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

19(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- The healthy eating policy was available for parents and guardians to view. The snacks and hot meal served on the day were healthy and nutritious. The hot meal of the day was chicken curry with rice. There were two children with dietary requirements who had the vegan curry option. Mealtime were relaxed and children were observed engaging with adults throughout mealtimes. Children were given ample time to eat without being rushed.
- Perishable items that were belonging to preschool children were stored in the service fridges for the morning and afternoon snack.
- Plates and cutlery were offered and used during children's snack times and were appropriate for their age and stage of development.
- Individually labelled water bottles were easily accessible from mobile trollies in each of the playrooms.
- Children attending the service who were toilet trained, toileted independently or with some assistance or support from the adults as required. It was observed that toileting accidents were treated in a caring and supportive way by adults.
- Younger children in nappies had them changed in a timely caring manner by the adults. Adults were observed picking up on children's cues and engaging with children throughout the day. Adults stated that regular nappy changing takes place throughout the day and as required.

- The children’s self-care was assisted and encouraged by adults for example to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after outdoor play and after messy play. Children were encouraged to be independent while putting on waterproofs for outdoor play.
- Bibs were provided for children for messy play and if required at mealtimes.
- In the playrooms the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in designated cosy areas.
- Sleep on demand was encouraged and promoted in the service.
- Children were observed in circle time, tabletop activities, sensory play, mealtimes, sleep time, outdoor play, group activities and taking the role of little helpers in the playrooms.

Programme of Activities

- Curriculum planning was in place to support each child’s development. The service had a programme of activity and curriculum in place to support the individual needs of each child in line with their age and stage of development.
- At story time and throughout the day adults created an interactive experience for children, allowing them to share their views and observations on stories. In turn this allowed the adults to create spontaneous activities and in turn assist with short term planning.
- Through the documented programme of activities children had the opportunity to interact in small and large groups. Children were given the opportunity and encouraged by adults to take the lead and engage with their peers.
- Adults created an environment for easy transitions throughout the session. Transitions during the day involved the children, they took an active role in preparing, assisting the adults, taking the lead at snack time and tidying up. This in turn promoted each child’s independence and leadership skills.
- Communication with parents/guardians was through the multimedia application that the service uses and at drop off and collection times.
- The service had observation charts in place for each child which was documented on the multimedia application which in turn assisted with curriculum planning. The children’s journal was maintained for parents and guardians to view.
- There was evidence of short-, medium- and long-term planning and the themes of the week were ‘The Senses’. Visual displays were on the walls to assist with the themes and children’s artwork.

- (2) It was observed that no corporal punishment was implemented in the service during the period of inspection. There was an emphasis on positive behaviour management, in line with the service's behaviour management policy and good practice was observed by the inspectors when adults were observed providing positive guidance, support and encouragement with minor issues that children were experiencing in the playrooms. An example of this was that two children got frustrated over wanting the same tractor, the adult engaged in a calm tone of voice and encouraged the children to take turns. Staff were heard helping the children to recognise and understand the rules of turn taking and sharing and solving the problem together.
- (3) The inspectors did not witness or hear any practices, throughout the period of inspection, which were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally, physically harmful or neglectful in respect of the early years children attending the service. Adults were observed to be kind and caring in their interactions with children. Communication and interactions between adults and children were conducted in a positive, sensitive and manner.

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 service was secured upon arrival and a camera monitor was in place to allow for the safe entry and exit of the children and to prevent unauthorised adults from entering.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing and a wall to protect the children within.
- Cleaning agents, mops, brushes and medication were secured out of reach of the children.
- Storage facilities were inaccessible to the children.
- All toys and equipment were maintained in good condition to prevent any safety issues for preschool children.
- All cleaning agents were stored in the sanitary areas and the kitchen out of reach of children.
- All adult areas were secured by means of a fob key which in turn ensured that children could not access these areas.

Infection Control:

- Perishable items belonging to children were stored in the service fridges.
- Anti-bacterial foam soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined, pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste were provided.
- Children were observed washing their hands before snack times, after toileting, after wiping their nose and after outdoor play.
- The hot water was maintained at a safe temperature of 30.4 °C in the children's sanitary areas.
- Child friendly handwashing posters were located above the wash hand basins to promote good handwashing practices.
- Individually labelled containers were available where clean linen was stored for sleep.
- The nappy changing areas were clean, each child's belongings had individual containers, were labelled and a self-sealing leak proof pedal bins were available.
- The correct procedure was observed at nappy changing in line with the service policy. There was a supply of aprons, gloves and anti-bacterial foam for effective hand washing. A self-sealing leak proof pedal bin was available for the disposal of nappies.

Administration of Medication:

- The manager stated that no child was on medication. If required a form must be filled out and signed by a parent or guardian on the multimedia application.
- There were three adults with first aid responder training. The trained adults were available on the day of inspection to the preschool children and were highlighted on the service roster.

Safe Sleep:

- There was a large, designated sleep room with 14 cots and 2 sleep beds. Stackable beds were also available for older children over 2 years of age.
- Children under 2 years requiring sleep or rest throughout the day were facilitated in cots in the designated sleep room. Children over 2 years requiring rest or sleep had access to stackable beds in the Daffodil room, Bluebell room, Daisies room and the Sunflower room.
- The required temperatures for children under and over 2 years of age was in line with the service policy and best practice. Appropriate lighting, ventilation, space between cots and stackable beds were maintained.
- It was observed that children were supervised by an adult in the playrooms and designated sleep room during sleep.

- The service kept 10-minute physical sleep checks on the childcare application. Records for all sleeping children included a record of the room temperature and the position, colour and breathing of the child as per the safe sleep for under 2's best practice guidelines for childcare services policy. These were reviewed and met the requirements.
- A pod thermometer was available in the designated sleep room and used as the method of recording the sleep room temperature between 16 °C and 20°C.
- A supply of clean linen was available for each child. All linen provided was clean, dry and stored in sealed labelled containers within the sleep room.
- Cellular blankets that allow air to circulate were used for all children under 2 years of age.
- In each playroom, quiet rest areas with a child size seating and soft matting were available for children to rest during the day.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills and servicing of the fire equipment was carried out by the service.
- The emergency exits were unobstructed to allow easy exit in the event of an emergency.

Outing:

- The manager stated that outings were not conducted by the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

The following may pose a risk of cross infection to a preschool child:

1. It was observed that an unclean floor brush was used on a lunch tabletop to remove rice in the Daffodil playroom.
2. A plastic child's toilet training seat was visible on the floor of the Sunflower sanitary area which was observed to be unclean. Contrary to the cleaning schedule displayed on the wall in the sanitary area no cleaning schedule was available or documented evidence that the child's toilet training seat had been cleaned recently.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1 & 2 Training has been provided for all staff in relation to infection control and cleaning records have been updated. Management will review cleaning records on a weekly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1 & 2 Documented evidence of updated training for all staff in relation to infection control. Evidence of updated cleaning records was also submitted.

Summary Comment

The documented evidence submitted and actions taken by the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and has been deemed to have met the regulatory requirement of this part of the Regulations.

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) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on the 06th of February 2026.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service date on the 5th of August 2025.
- The smoke and fire detection alarm system had the last annual service date on the 22nd of January 2026.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire on the premises.

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

During the inspection the area manager, manager and adults ensured that the preschool children were adequately supervised in the indoor and outdoor environments.

In conversation, adults in each playrooms stated they had received training in the policies of the service. They were aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to supervising children during the operation of the service.

The adult child ratio was maintained in each playroom and in the outdoor play areas. This was evidenced by the staff roster and observations by the inspectors on the day.

To reduce the risk of a child leaving the service unsupervised the service has implemented a head count before going out to the outdoor areas and a check prior to returning to the playrooms. This is to ensure that all children are accounted for in the outdoor area.

It was observed on the day that the adults ensured that children were supervised during sleep, mealtimes, in the playrooms, in the outdoor play area, while children used the sanitary areas and during nappy changing. The adults were observed to supervise children by sound and by sight.