

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(s) of Inspection:	19/11/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	64	PM 64
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).

<p>Conditions if applicable</p>	<p>27th June 2025</p> <p>Regulation 9, 19 and 23 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.</p> <p>The Registered provider will be required to comply with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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<p>Description of service</p>
<p>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 8 am to 6 pm, 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 5 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. To the rear of the premises children have access to 2 outdoor play areas.</p>
<p>Staffing</p>
<p>There is a total of 20 adults employed in the service, 18 adults including the area manager, service manager and cook were on the premises on the day of inspection. The registered provider does not work directly with children and the general manger was not present on the day of inspection.</p>

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 and premises. 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 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.

(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 the 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 manger 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 on entry into the service, these detailed the staff names and their associated care rooms.
- (2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for 11 staff members who had commenced employment in the service since the dates of last inspection on the 25 and 26 February 2025. Therefore, recruitment records in relation to these 11 new staff members were reviewed.
- (a) Seventeen of the 22 written and validated references were from past employers.
- (b) Five of the 22 written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 11 adults working in the service, demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years.
- (c) International police vetting was available for 10 adults working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than 6 months.
- (4) There was evidence that 9 of 11 adults had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 7 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent. Two of the remaining adults that did not have the required qualification had letters of eligibility to practice from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.
- (7)(a) Documentation was available that evidenced that all 11 adults had received induction training which 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. New individual training modules had been introduced since the last inspection including dignity and respect in the workplace, protecting children and vulnerable adults, nappy changing, food safety and essential fire safety which were evidenced with individually named certificates in each staff member's recruitment file.

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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on both days of inspection.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to. There were 17 adults working directly with 64 children on the day of inspection.
- (8)(a) The staff roster indicated that the designated person in charge and a named person was on the premises while the early years children were present.

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;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (i) The staff roster was maintained accurately, the roster for the week of inspection, 17 November 2025, had the name of each staff member working in the service for each day recorded. This included the kitchen, cover staff and management. A separate break roster was available which the manager stated was updated on a daily basis and as required.

- (k) A sample of 15 accident, incident, injury records, 3 from each of the 5 care rooms, were reviewed and found to contain all the necessary information. Details including the children's names, dates of birth, incident/accidents and injuries, care given and signatures of the parent/guardian, manager and staff members were recorded on the electronic application system.

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

(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 and there was a vegan dahl option. Mealtimes were relaxed and children were observed engaging with adults throughout mealtimes. Classical music was played in the background during mealtimes.
- Perishable items that were belonging to preschool children were stored in the service fridges.
- Plates and cutlery were offered and used during children's snack times and were appropriate for their age and stage of development.
- Children attending the service who were toilet trained, toileted independently or with some assistance or support by adults as required.
- 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.
- The children's self-care was assisted and encouraged by adults for e.g., to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after outdoor play and after messy 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, mealtimes, sleep time, outdoor play, group activities and taking the role of little helpers in the playrooms.
- (3) The inspectors did not witness or hear any practices throughout the period of inspection which were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or 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 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. A fob controlled access system was in place for adults working in the service. In addition, a buzzer operated camera system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children and to prevent unauthorised adults from entering.
- The outdoor areas were secured with high concrete walls and fencing to protect the children within.
- Cleaning agents were secured out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- At nappy changing best practice was observed in line with the service policy by adults.
- Handwashing was observed before snack time, after toileting, outdoor play and gentle reminders were given by adults to children to encourage hand washing.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with thermostatically controlled hot water recorded at 38.3 °C, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste.
- Child friendly handwashing posters were located above the wash handbasins to promote good handwashing practices.
- The prepared infant formula was stored correctly in a fridge in the playrooms.
- The soothers were stored in individually labelled containers and a sterilising unit was available for use.

- Individually labelled containers were available for storing bedlinen and personal clothing.

Safe Sleep:

- It was observed by the inspectors that all playrooms and the designated sleep rooms had physical sleep checks carried out every 10 minutes. Adults were present and assigned to supervise children's sleep in each of the playrooms and designated sleep room.
- The designated sleep room had 14 standard cots available for children under 2 years of age. In addition, there were 2 stackable beds available for children over 2 years of age.
There were also 32 stackable beds available for children over 2 years of age who required to rest or sleep.
- The designated sleep room for children over 12 months was maintained between 18-22°C in the sleep room on the day of inspection. A thermometer was available for adults to measure and monitor the room temperatures.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,

Compliance Information

The building was kept in a state of good repair, the indoor, outdoor play area and play equipment was maintained in a proper state of repair.