

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020LD001
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Name of Service:	ABC Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Drinan, Ballymahon, Co. Longford
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Eircode:	N39 V8X6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Collette Brennan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	37	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan and R. Flynn.
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
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Description of service

ABC Childcare Ballymahon is a privately owned and operated early years' service. The service is registered to cater for 44 children and provides a morning sessional service for children aged between 2 – 6 years.

The premises consists of an entrance lobby, one large playroom and sanitary accommodation on the ground floor and two preschool rooms and sanitary accommodation provided on the first floor. The service has access to an enclosed outdoor area at the rear.

Some parking and set down facilities are provided.

Staffing

ABC Childcare Ltd. employs seven childcare staff. The registered provider does not work directly in the service and has employed a manager as the person in charge.

On the day of inspection there were seven adults present including the manager who was working directly with the children. The regional manager arrived for the feedback meeting.

All adults working in the service have completed a major award 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 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, regional manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

The files of seven employees were reviewed.

- (2)
- (a),(b) Two validated references were available on file for each staff member, from either a past employer or reputable source.
- (c) Garda Vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member, who as part of their role in the service worked directly with the children. 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 available for each of the three staff members employed in the service, who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Copies of certificates of qualification were maintained on file for each staff member who as part of their role in the service worked directly with the children. This documentation demonstrated that staff members held at least a minimum Level 5 in early childhood care and education on the QQI Framework.

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 thirty-seven children attending the service being supervised directly by seven adults during the inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to on the day of the inspection.

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 met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. The staff members advised the inspector that they immediately cut/chop any food that may pose a choking risk to a child at snack time.

There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed daily and reviewed by the manager weekly to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues.

Children's lunches were refrigerated on arrival at the service.

Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the three rooms which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication and documentation of same in the service. Medicine was safely stored in the service. Written health care plans were in place for children with a health condition that required additional care and /or required medication to be administered on a regular basis.

Safe Sleep:

Comfortable rest areas were available for the children in each care room if they wished to take a break from activities and rest.

Fire Safety:

The staff members were familiar with the fire evacuation procedures from the service. Fire exits were not obstructed. Fire drills were carried out and records maintained.

Outing:

The service does not conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The gate to the outdoor area on the left-hand side of the building was not of sufficient height to prevent unauthorised entry to the outdoor area and back of the service. The inspector was able to reach across the gate and access the sliding bolt and clip used to secure the gate.
2. One of the two entrance doors to the service was observed to be unsecured at 12:20 hours after a group of children used it to access the outdoor area. It is acknowledged that it was immediately secured by the manager when brought to her attention. This created a potential risk of unauthorised entry to the service.
3. The heating boiler unit in the outdoor area was accessible to the children and required to be blocked off.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The gate height has been raised.
2. The entrance door remains locked any time a staff leaves they ask another staff to lock the door behind them. A notice has been placed on the door to remind all staff leaving through the front door to get the door locked behind them.
3. The boiler unit is blocked off by a permanent wooden enclosure.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photograph of completed work.
2. Photograph.
3. Photograph of completed work.

Summary Comment

The written response and photographic evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (2) *Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.*
- (3) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - (iii) an employee, or*
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*
- (4) *A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in the care rooms.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a),(b) The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained. The manager ensured that the two inspectors' entry to the service was recorded in the visitor log.
- (4) The manager confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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) A staff member present was trained in first aid response (FAR) and was immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)

(a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the care rooms.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending 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 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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 27 February 2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on 9 May 2024 and the smoke alarm were last serviced on 15 November 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2026. The insurance provided cover for 42 children.