

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020TY002
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Name of Service:	Little Owl's Naionra and Clubhouse
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Address of Service:	12 Cnoc Cluain, Ballina, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	V94 KW9W
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Name of Registered Provider:	Crona Byrne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary, E45A099
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

This sessional service was established in 2020 to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided. This service is an extension of The Owl and the Pussycat Day Care and Afterschool Club. All except one of the children currently enrolled in the service attend The Owl and the Pussycat Day Care and Afterschool Club for part-time or full day care and are transported from the service to attend the morning session in the Naíonra and return to the main service again after the session.

The sessional service is operated between 9.15am and 12.15pm, Monday – Friday for 38 weeks of the year. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme for eligible children.

This service is bi-lingual, introducing the Irish language to children by using both English and Irish language throughout the morning.

The service is provided from an end of row, ground-floor apartment in a residential area in the town of Ballina in north Tipperary, that was built for the purpose of providing a childcare service. The premises consists of three activity rooms, two of which are currently used by the pre-school children. There is also a spacious entrance hall, kitchen, sanitary accommodation areas and an enclosed outdoor play area at the side of the premises.

Staffing

The pre-school leader was the person in charge in the service. There were two staff present in the service on the day of inspection working directly with the 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4), 11(1)(3)(8), 15(1)(3), 16(1)(3), 19(1)(b), 23, 24(1)(3), 25(1)(2), 26(1)(4) and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of the Pre-School Child.

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 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

(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 pre-school leader was the person in charge on the day of inspection, there was a person available who could deputise if required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present for the duration of the session each day.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that of the two staff employed in the service, one staff member had been employed since the previous inspection 08 February 2023. Both staff files and the registered provider were reviewed as part of the inspection process.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for each staff member working at the service.

(b) Not applicable as the available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting was available on file for staff working in the service. Garda vetting had been renewed, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as the staff had not lived outside the state for longer than 6 months as adults.

(4) Staff employed to work with the pre-school children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at level 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) There were 2 staff working directly with the 13 children aged between 3 and 5 years old.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1:7 which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1:11.

(8)(c) There were two staff present while the service was in operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) The service used a four page, pre-printed registration form which was completed by parents or guardians prior to the child attending the service. The registration forms contained the required information as detailed under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

(3) The completed registration forms for all children were held in the main service, The Owl and the Pussycat Day Care and Afterschool Club, where they could be inspected by an authorised person.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The information required to be recorded in writing, as detailed under parts (a) to (k) of this regulation, was available.

(3) The required records were available on the premises either in the service or in the The Owl and the Pussycat service.

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children.

The staff were observed to work with the children at their level, encouraging and supporting play by gentle instruction and demonstration.

The staff supported the children to become independent with self-care skills such as dressing for the outdoors, using the toilet, tidying up after themselves, washing their hands, wiping their noses and caring for their belongings. Staff were available to the children to guide them and provide assistance when required, for example children were taught the 'up and over' method for putting on their coats. Children were praised for the tasks they accomplished by themselves.

The children enjoyed play indoors and outdoors during the morning.

The staff introduced the Irish language to the children through the use of songs and rhymes, colours and numbers and by repeated phrases such as 'maith an cailín/buachaill'.

The staff modelled good manners for the children by always using 'please' and 'thank you', for example 'thank you for waiting your turn'.

Children and staff sat and ate together at lunchtime, sharing conversation in a relaxed atmosphere.

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 kept secured. Entry to the service was via the front door which was managed by the staff. There was a doorbell for visitors to use to alert staff of their presence.

The gate in the side wall which gave access to the outdoor area was kept secured. If children were playing outside when their parents came to collect them, staff could open this gate to let the children exit by it. Unauthorised access to the premises was prevented by this gate, a second secured gate from the outdoor area that led to the back of the premises, and the front door.

Medications were labelled and stored out of reach of children.

Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children.

Infection control:

The service had an infection prevention and control policy which included handwashing. Children and staff were observed washing their hands at appropriate times during the morning.

Fire safety:

Fire escape routes were kept clear of obstruction

Outing:

The service had a procedure in place for the safe conduct of children by bus or car between The Owl and the Pussycat and Little Owls Naíonra and Afterschool Club. All except one of the children transferred between the two services each day.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

1. There was no hot water available on the day of inspection. The service manager explained that the timer may have been knocked out by a recent power cut and would investigate same.
2. The chairs used by the children which had metal legs and moulded seats of textured hard plastic were marked with ingrained dirt and needed deep cleaning. It is acknowledged that following the inspection the chairs were power washed and a photo of the clean chairs was sent to the inspector on 2 October 2025.

Administration of medication:

3. There were two auto-injector pens available for use on one of the children in the event of an allergic reaction. Signed parental consent to administer the medication or a care plan detailing how to manage this child in the event of an allergic reaction, were not available.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

1. A new emersion was installed to ensure hot water will be available when needed.
2. All chairs were power-washed and photos sent to inspector. The chairs will be maintained to the standard required.

Administration of medication:

3. A new care plan is in place for any child entering the building who needs one and forms are all signed by parents. The care plans and medication forms will be checked weekly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

Photos of chairs that had been power-washed were received by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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.

(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.*

Compliance Information

(1) Staff were responsible for checking in and out the children using the weekly attendance register.

(3)(a) Staff ensured that no unauthorised persons were admitted to the service without approval.

(b) A written record was maintained of any visitors to the service.

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) There were three staff in The Owl and the Pussycat who had current certification as first aid responders (FAR) who were available to the children when required. In addition, a member of staff working in the service held current certification in paediatric first aid.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available in the kitchen.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children when required.

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) There was a written record of the fire drills that took place in the service once a month during term time.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. Firefighting equipment was serviced annually, most recently in September 2025. A new alarm system, including smoke alarm, was installed in the service in August 2025.
- (4) There was a notice of the fire evacuation route and procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed on the walls in each room of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had current insurance cover valid until 28 February 2026.