

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021CE002
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Name of Service:	Croí na nÓg Preschool
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Address of Service:	Creegh South, Cree, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V15YD63
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Name of Registered Provider:	Natasha Murray
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	9
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Croí na nÓg Preschool is a privately owned service located in Creegh National school, in west Clare. The service operates Monday to Friday from 09:30 to 13:00 catering for children ranging in age from two to five years. The Happy Hippos room and the Giggles Garden room were converted into two rooms in 2025 from a single room. The second classroom within the school that was originally used by the service is no longer in use. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises. The perimeter is safely secured with walls, fencing and a gate.

Staffing

Five adults are employed by the service. On the 12 November 2025 the registered provider and three adults worked directly with the children. The registered provider provides an administrative role and works directly with the children. The adults held appropriate qualifications 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, health, welfare and development of child, and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (2) (8)(a)

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service (1)(h)(i)

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 - First aid (1)(2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 29- Premises (e)

Regulation 30- Minimum space requirements (1)(2)3

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 registered provider 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 registered provider was the person in charge, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and the person to deputise were available during the inspection.

(2)

Five files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

Ten validated references from past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.

(b)

Not applicable, as the references were sourced from past employers.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the adults employed by the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Not applicable, international police vetting was not required for the adults working in the service as they had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.

(4)

The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 6 to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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)
During the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.
- (2)
The minimum ratios of adults supervising children was maintained on both days of inspection. On the 12 November 2025 four adults supervised twenty-six children during the sessional programme and two supervised the nine children attending the part time service.
- (8)(a)
During the inspection, more than two adults were available in the service at all times.

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:*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
 - (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis.*

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(h)
The children’s arrival and departure times to and from the service were not recorded in the service’s record book. It is acknowledged the children were ticked off as attending the service, however it could not be determined clearly the number of children attending on a sessional basis or part time basis. This posed a safety risk to children in the event of a fire or emergency situation.
- (i)
While it acknowledged that a staff roster was available for September and October 2025. A staff roster was not available for November 2025 to demonstrate planning for early arrivals, late collections, breaks, holidays and sick leave or any other situation where additional staff may be needed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(h)
The service is using a clock in system for staff and children now. Using an application system to comply with the regulations and management of staffing and child records
- (i)
No corrective or preventive action response submitted.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)

(h)

No evidence submitted.

(i)

A copy of the staff roster.

Summary Comment

The stated action and supporting evidence submitted by the registered provider on the 05 and 16 December 2025 will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a respectful and caring manner. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions with the children. The adults praised and encouraged the children, conversed with the children at their level, used soft tones of voice, responded promptly to their cues for assistance and comfort. The adults demonstrated an awareness of the children's capabilities, interests and preferences. The children were encouraged to be independent in play and learning, whilst caring for their belongings, at mealtime and whilst using the toilet. The children in each room were offered a range of developmentally challenging play and learning activities. The adults supported the children's choice of individual and group engagement in activities.

The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care and prompted to wipe their noses at appropriate intervals. The children sat together at tables in low-level chairs for mealtimes. Lunches were provided by the parents/guardians. Mealtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable occasion. Beverages of water were available in accessible area throughout the day.

Physical and Material Environment:

The care rooms were bright and well-resourced and were laid out to enable the children to freely access the equipment and materials. The care rooms were laid out and designed with challenging and interesting areas for children to play and learn. The rooms were well planned and resourced with a variety of activity areas to ensure that children were provided with choice and options which supported individual and group play and emerging interests. Children were observed to be fully engaged in play and make smooth transitions between the activity areas.

The walls of the care rooms were displayed with numerical and alphabetical learning aids and the children's individual artwork and family and birthday sections. The care rooms were appropriately resourced with home corner, art stations, construction areas, pretend doll play areas, wooden activity units and dress up areas. Seating with soft furnishings and mats with adjacent reading materials were used by the children to rest and relax. Low level shelving units were accessible to the children with a range of manipulative, sensory, imaginative and constructive toys and learning materials for the age and level of development of the children.

The outdoor play areas were located to the rear of the service. The outdoor play areas were enclosed with a concrete and grass surface. The outdoor play area accommodated a mud kitchen, hoops, balls, connector games, a climbing frame, goalpost, a connect four game and a bench.

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:

- A bell operated system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the service.
- The outdoor play area to the rear of the service was secured with fencing, concrete walls and gates to protect the children within.
- All toys and play equipment were maintained in good condition.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean condition.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins. A nappy changing area was available in the sanitary facility.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals after messy play activities, using the toilet and before mealtime.
- The children's perishable food items were stored in the refrigerators in the care rooms.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered in the service during the inspection.
- The adults demonstrated an awareness of the service's administration of medication policy and procedure.
- Documentation was available for the adults to record medication should medication be administered to the children in attendance.

Fire Safety:

- The registered provider held a record of up-to-date fire safety training.
- The fire exit routes and passageways were clear from obstruction in the service.
- The fire exits routes and fire assembly points were readily identified with signage and known to the adults.

Outing:

- An outing was not conducted on the day of inspection.
- An outings policy was available to inform parents/guardians and the adults working in the service of the service procedure for conducting outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Looped blind cords were not secured on the windows in both the Hippos room and the Giggles Garden room. This posed a risk of strangulation to a child.

Fire Safety:

2. Records of monthly fire drills were not available. It is acknowledged that a fire drill was completed on the 15 October 2025. The last recorded fire drill prior to this was 17 October 2024. This posed a safety risk to children and adults in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Blinds cords are replaced and mounted to the wall.

Fire Safety:

2. No corrective or preventive action submitted.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. No evidence submitted.

Fire Safety:

2. Photograph of the record of completed fire drills.

Summary Comment

Based on the registered providers response and evidence submitted the non-compliances are resolved. The implemented measures will be reviewed on next inspection.

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)
Two adults working directly with the children held a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training.
- (2)(a)
A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in an accessible and conspicuous position in the office adjacent to the care rooms.
- (b)
The first aid box was available in the service for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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 fire fighting 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 record was available to demonstrate a fire drill was carried out by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 10 October 2025.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment took place on the 18 February 2025.

(4)

Fire action notices were displayed in the service demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

An up-to-date maintenance service certificate was not available for the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises. The last service took place on the 27 June 2024. This non-compliance was found on last inspection 20 June 2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b)

A service of the smoke alarm system took place on the 18 November 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(b)

A copy of the smoke alarm system maintenance certificate.

Summary Comment

Based on the evidence provided the area of non-compliance is resolved. The implemented measures will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Non-Compliance Information

The service did not hold appropriate insurance cover relevant to the service type provided. The service had insurance cover for 32 preschool children attending on a sessional basis, however the service is currently providing a part-time service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A corrective or preventive action was not submitted.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Based on the registered providers response the area of non-compliance remains outstanding.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Non-Compliance Information

(e)
A minimum of one toilet and one wash hand basin for every 11 preschool children was not provided. A third toilet and wash hand basin was not available for use by the number of children enrolled in service. Two toilets and two wash hand basins were available for the twenty-six children enrolled in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Three toilets are available for use by the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of additional sanitary facility.

Summary Comment

Based on the registered provider's response and supporting documentation the area of non-compliance is resolved under Regulation 29 (e). The implemented measures will be reviewed in next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1)
Adequate clear floor space was provided for the children attending the service.
- (2)
The registered provider ensured that the minimum amount of clear floor space was available for the provision of part-time care. The total available floor space in the Happy Hippos room included: 33.59 m² and in the Giggles Garden included: 33.86m².