

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2021SO001

Name of Service: Claire Barden Award Winning Childcare

Address of Service: Abhainn Mor, Ballincarrow, Collooney, Co. Sligo

Eircode: F91 A310

Name of Registered Provider: Claire Barden

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 16/10/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	26

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:
Early Years Inspectorate,
TUSLA Child & Family Agency,
Markievicz House
Barrack St,
Sligo,
F91 XC84

Inspection undertaken by: L Costello and S Killeen

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

Description of service

This full day care service is located in the town of Collooney, Co Sligo and provides sessional, part time and fulltime care from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. The service is registered to cater for children aged between one and six years of age and is also registered to provide school age care. The service operates from a detached two-story building consisting of four care rooms. The two care rooms on the ground floor cater for the younger children and the first-floor care rooms cater for preschool and school aged children. A kitchen, sleep room, sanitary facilities and an office are located on the ground floor. To the rear and side of property is a large enclosed outdoor area with a roofed outdoor playroom.

Staffing

The service employs 11 staff members, 10 of which work directly with the preschool children and one adult who works with school age children only. The registered provider is on the premises daily and works 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16 (i) (j), 20, 23, 24, 25, 27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 (i) (j).

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 registered provider, 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) (b).

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required. The person in charge remained in the service throughout the inspection.

(2) (a) (b).

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection.

A total of two files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for all staff members where reviewed.

Four written and validated references from past employers were available for the two newly employed staff members.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eleven staff. Members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as both newly recruited adults had not lived outside the state for a period of six months or more.

(4)

Two adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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

(2)
The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

At approximately 09.:50am

- Countess Markievicz Room: 1 adult cared for 5 children aged 2 to 3 years of age.
- WB Yeats Room: 1 adult cared for 11 children aged 3 to 4 years of age.
- Queen Meave Room: 2 adults cared for 16 children aged 2.8 years to 5 years of age.

The following adult child ratios were observed at approximately 13:38pm:

- Countess Markievicz Room: 1 adult cared for 5 children aged 2 to 3 years of age.
- WB Yeats Room: 1 adult cared for 7 children aged 3 to 4 years of age.

- Queen Meave Room: 3 adults cared for 17 children aged 2.8 years to 5 years of age

(8)
The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample of attendance records reviewed

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
While the adult-to-child ratio observed during the inspection met the minimum regulatory requirements, it was noted that in one room, where one staff member was caring for eleven children aged 3 to 4 years, the needs of the children were not fully met. Several children required additional support with emotional regulation, social interaction, and assistance with routine tasks such as using the bathroom and washing hands. The staffing level in this instance did not allow for adequate individual attention or support, which impacted the overall quality of care provided

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

An application has been submitted for Aim support prior to inspection for funding for additional support. In the interim we have an additional adult support at intervals during the ECCE session. An application has also been submitted to better start Aim quality development which we are now participating in.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Application submitted
- Certificate submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action adequately addresses the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation will be reviewed on next inspection.

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;

(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.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends 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) (i)

The registered provider demonstrated accurate records of the staff roster in place in the service.

(j)

A sample review of medication administration records reviewed since the last inspection evidenced that records included the reason for administration, the amount, witness and consent of parents.

(k)

A sample review of 15 incident and accident records evidenced that risk assessments were completed after incidents and parents were informed of same.

(2) (b)

The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain these records for the required timeframe set out in legislation.

(3)

The registered provider ensured that the records were available for review by the authorised person on the day of the inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(2) A registered provider-

- (a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016,
- shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The service consisted of four large playrooms, three in use for preschool children. Each one assigned for use by different age groups of children. There were adequate and suitable indoor play facilities available in each room for the age range of children attending. The rooms presented as bright and visually appealing spaces with an orderly arrangement of play equipment and materials set into clearly defined areas of interest. These included arts and crafts, construction, small world items, dress up props, play kitchen areas, library's, sensory tables, relaxing areas, problem solving toys and wide range of manipulate play resources. Open low level shelving units enabled all items to be readily accessible to the children and suitable sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities.

'Countess Markievicz' room catered for children aged two to three years. This area included soft floor matting, wall mounted toys, baskets with play items, soft toys. Clearly defined interest areas such as a kitchen area, sensory play area, a cosy area with reading materials dress up area and a range of open shelving and low-level units containing small world toys, blocks, shape sorters and musical instruments.

‘Queen Maeve’ room catered for the older preschool child and was equipped with a variety of materials and resources to stimulate the imagination of the preschool child. Equipment included wooden shops, kitchens, dress up and role play areas. An array of Montessori based equipment stored on low level accessible shelving, supported counting and measuring skills. Baskets of puzzles, jigsaws and tabletop activities were available for the children. An extensive library facilitated language development.

‘WB Yeats’ room caters for preschool children ages 2-3years it is a large, bright, and welcoming space, tastefully decorated with children’s artwork, maps, and flags from different countries, creating a stimulating and inclusive learning environment. The layout is thoughtfully arranged with clearly defined areas for play, learning, and rest. There are open shelves displaying a wide variety of age-appropriate toys and resources, allowing children to make independent choices. Materials observed included puzzles, books, construction blocks, a child-sized couch with soft cushions, a home corner with utensils and play food, a doll’s house with small furniture, an ice cream parlour, a flower shop, and a construction area with cars and trucks.

(b)
There was one designated sleep rooms in the service, the sleep room was of the ‘countess Markievicz’ room and consisted of two standard cots. Each cot was fitted with a mattress containing the required safety label which had a waterproof covering. Stackable floor beds were available for older children if required, these were not observed to be used on the day of inspection. Each of the rooms caring for older children were equipped with suitable and comfortable rest areas including soft floor mats and soft cushions and sofas.

(2) (a)
A large secure outdoor area was divided into space for all four rooms, each one suitably fenced to provide safe play areas for children outdoors. There was a small area located directly of the countess Markievicz room with an array of playhouses, slides, castles, climbing frames and see saws. Another area contained a mud kitchen, a digging area and a small grass area. A third area contained a wooden boat, climbing frame and swings, school bus and a variety of climbing tyres and balance beams. One area had an overhead canopy to allow for play in all weathers. An area to the side of the building was tarmacked and allowed for cars, tractors and bikes to be used around child made track.

Non-Compliance Information

- The ‘Countess Markievicz’ room had an array of musical and interactive toys for the younger children to play with. However, many of these toys did not have the required batteries, therefore not interactive or a musical resource for the preschool children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

The batteries have been replaced, and we will continue to check the musical toys regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Receipt for Batteries.
- Photograph of batteries purchased.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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 main door was secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service.
- The outdoor perimeter is secure with high level fencing and secured gates.
- Cleaning products are stored on high level shelving out of reach of the preschool children.
- The kitchen door has a high-level safety handle out of the reach of the preschool children.

Infection Control:

- The rooms appeared clean and well maintained with up to date cleaning schedules on display.
- Hand basins had the required liquid soap, warm water and paper towels for effective hand hygiene.
- Children were observed to wash their hands after playing outside, using the bathroom and prior to meals and snacks.
- Staff members were observed to clean tables and sweep floors after messy play or mealtimes.

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with staff members, they confirmed they do not routinely administer medication. Medication if prescribed is administered and witnessed with the consent of the parent in line with the medication policy in operation in the service.

Safe Sleep:

- A dedicated sleep room is in operation in the service with two standard cots. Sleep needs were met on an individual basis responsive to the cues of the children.
- Stackable floor beds are available for children over two who require sleep or rest throughout the session.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits remained free from obstruction on the day of inspection.
- A fire assembly point was clearly displayed in the car park of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(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.

(3) 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

- (2)
Children are checked in and out of the building by one staff member.
- (3)(a)
On arrival to the service the registered provider ensured the inspectors were checked in and identification checked prior to entry ensuring no unauthorised person gained access to the building.
- (3) (b)
A written record is maintained of all visitors to the service and the reason for their entry.
- (4)
The registered provider is aware of the requirement to maintain these records for the period set out in regulation.

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)
The registered provider demonstrated that there was one adult available to children trained in first aid for children at all times as required.
- (2) (a) (b)
The service has a fully stocked first aid box and materials stored in a central location accessible to the preschool children as required.

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

Supervision was observed to be adequate on the day of inspection.

During play indoors, staff members positioned themselves to ensure all areas of the room could be observed. In rooms where there was more than one staff present, effective communication was observed ensuring children remained in view at all times. In the rooms where only one adult was present, support was given at meal times and nappy changing to ensure all children were supervised.

In the outdoors, staff across the service worked together to ensure that all the children were in view and safe within the outdoor area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider, provided a certification of insurance for a full day care service for 55 preschool children from 28/03/2025 to 27/03/2026.