

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022CN001
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Name of Service:	Mini Me's ECCE and Afterschool
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Address of Service:	5 Old Coach , Glebe, Castlerahan, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	A82 YA62
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anita Clarke
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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

Mini Me's ECCE and Afterschool is a privately-owned childcare service located in a rural area of Castlerahan, Co. Cavan. The service is registered to provide part time and sessional care to a maximum of 22 children aged 3 to 6 years and operates from 9.15am to 2pm each weekday. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. One care room with sanitary accommodation is located in a designated area within the registered providers home. A room which has recently been refurbished to the rear of the registered providers home, includes sanitary facilities and is used as an extra play space for the children.

Two large outdoor areas are available for children's use. Car parking is provided to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are six staff employed in the service which includes the registered provider who works in the service on a daily basis. Two staff members are funded under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) and two staff are employed to work with school aged 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 27 Supervision and Regulation 28 Insurance.

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
- (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.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge who is the registered provider, and a named person in charge to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster on display and discussion with the staff team.

(2) The files for 6 staff were reviewed.

(a) A total of 5 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

- (b) A total of 5 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 6 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for five employed staff.
- (d) Not applicable as supportive documentation demonstrated that no staff members had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as adults.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 4 staff employed to work with preschool children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.
- A qualification for 2 staff employed to work with school aged children was not required.

Non-Compliance Information

(9) (2) (a) (b)

There were no references available on file for one staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Registered provider request two references and validated both references. Registered provider will wait for all documents to be available before staff member starts employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two validated references from previous employers for one staff member.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9 (2) (a) and (b).

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:
Four adults cared for a total of twenty-two children aged between 3 years 3 months to 5 years 2 months.
The preschool room operated in two separate groups during outdoor play time, planned activities and free play times, and then joined together for snack, lunch and circle time.
- (8) A review of the staff rosters and the staff sign in and out records, demonstrated that there are at least 2 adults on the premises while the part time care service is in operation.

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

(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

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

Healthy eating was promoted within the service. The children's lunches taken in from home contained a variety of foods to include sandwiches, cheese, crackers, fruit, rice cakes and yogurts. The children had access to their drinks during their time in the service. Two snack times occur, the first at 10.45am for children attending on a sessional basis, and again at 1pm for children attending on a part time basis. The lunches for the children that attend on a part time basis were observed to have an adequate quantity for two snack times. The morning snack time was observed to be relaxed, with children given adequate time to eat their food. The staff supported children with their food items where required, and individual placemats for each child was observed in use.

The children were observed to use the toilet independently, and where children required supports for nappy/pull ups changed the staff facilitated this in line with the child's care routine.

Spare clothing was available on site, and aprons were provided for messy play activities.

Self-care practises were encouraged such as gentle encouragement given to children to clean their noses.

A rest area to include soft seating and cushions was provided, where children could take time out to rest and relax during their day.

Outdoor play is promoted within the setting, with all children availing of outdoor play at least once during their time in the service. While in the outdoors the children were observed to be dressed appropriately for the weather on the day of the inspection.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere in the service was warm and inviting. The children demonstrated familiarity with the staff who cared for them. Conversations between the staff and children about children's home life to include a child's upcoming birthday and Mother's Day occurred throughout the morning.

The staff were observed to use gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings. The staff were observed to promote positive behaviour, and praise was given where positive interactions between children and their peers occurred.

The staff were observed to demonstrate sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families. The staff respected parental wishes while also allowing for the child's own individual preferences. The staff were observed to treat each child with respect and addressed each child by name. Individual care plans were in place where required.

Communication with parents is in person at arrival and collection times, and the use of a text message service and Facebook page is also used. The staff were observed to greet parents upon collection time and spend time with the child and their parent to give feedback on how their child's day had been. Daffodils the children had planted a few months ago were sent home with the children along with Mother's Day cards that the children had made.

The staff team were observed to work well together, keeping each other informed of the next steps in the routine which ensured smooth transitions for the children.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor environment was bright and welcoming. The preschool room was comfortable, pleasant and laid out to suit the needs of all children present. The designated learning environments in the preschool room provided a range of enriching learning experiences for the children. Table top toys to include colouring, jigsaws and connection toys allowed children opportunities to enhance their fine motor skills. Well-resourced areas to include construction area, a home corner, dolls and play equipment provided space for the children to engage in role play, with some of the children observed to play doctors with the baby dolls, and to "fix the broken kitchen" with the tool sets. Sensory play to include play dough, sand and creative materials was provided in designated areas.

An area set up for office role play and an area for children to rest and read a book was also available. Popular areas of play during the inspection were outdoor play, sand play, construction work and role play games.

Colouring daffodil pictures also proved popular with children on the day.

Materials were freely accessible on low level shelving with toy boxes available at the children's level. The toy boxes were clearly labelled with photos and the words of what was in each box, allowing children to easily identify items of choice.

The tables and chairs provided were suitable for the number and age and stage of development of the children present.

A detached room to the rear of the premises had been recently refurbished. The registered provider advised that the building has been insulated, and a toilet fitted, and this now provides an additional play space for the children. The room was surfaced with soft floor mats, and the children were observed to take off their shoes while playing in this area. A climbing structure with slide and ball pool, doll houses with dolls and farms with tractors and animals, a play kitchen with real life materials, baby dolls and play equipment and jigsaw tables were some of the play materials provided in this additional room.

The designated outdoor areas are spacious and well laid out to accommodate the needs of the children to include smaller interest play areas and large spacious areas for the use of trucks and ride on toys.

A ground surface of concrete was provided in the area to the rear of the premises with painted designs for tracks and games for children to follow. Developmentally appropriate materials and equipment were available to include hula hoops, ride on trucks, a stoned gravel area with diggers, a kitchen area and water walls and the walls were brightly decorated with painted murals.

The area located to the front of the premises had a mixture of grass and gravel ground surfacing. Wooden play structures to include climbing areas, slides and areas for swings was provided. A tunnel and additional climbing frames were also available in this area. The registered provider advised the inspector that this area was not in use since the winter but will have a risk assessment carried out and swings refitted before the area is used for children.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The premises was appropriately secured when the inspector arrived unannounced, which aids to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- A visitor log was maintained, and the inspector was requested to sign in upon arrival.

- The outdoor area located to the rear of the premises is secured by lockable gates and high-level walls and fencing. The outdoor area to the front of the premises which is currently not in use, is secured by wooden and metal fencing. The registered provider advised the inspector that when this area is used, the main entrance gates at the roadway are closed over and secured.
- The toys and play equipment observed to be used by the children were presented in good repair.
- Risk assessments are carried out daily both in the indoor and outdoor play environments, with records available for review and completed up to date.
- The kitchen entrance door was fitted with a child safety gate and was inaccessible to the children.
- Handrails provided were suitable for the use of both children and adults and were maintained in good repair.
- Floor coverings in the indoor care room were observed to be in good condition.
- Cleaning agents were stored on high level shelving and out of the reach of children.
- Fire exits were observed to remain free from obstruction during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, bins and disposable paper towels was available for handwashing purposes. Hand washing was observed in practise after outdoor play, before snack times and after children used the toilet.
- Waste bins were stored in an area outdoors that was inaccessible to the children.
- Aprons, gloves and suitable nappy changing facilities for the age of the children in attendance was provided.
- The sanitary areas were ventilated with openable windows and mechanical or trickle ventilation.
- The children's snacks taken in from home were stored in the fridge until snack times.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review and completed up to date. The service was presented in a clean and hygienic condition in both the indoor and outdoor areas.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Garda vetting was available for 6 staff. However, one of the staff vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Applied for Garda vetting for staff member. To keep on top and be aware of dates on Garda vetting.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of updated Garda vetting for one staff member.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 23.

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 ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. The one staff member who held in date FAR training certificate was present and was scheduled on the roster to be present during the operating hours of the preschool service.

(2) (a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available on the premises and was stored in an accessible and conspicuous location out of the reach of children.

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 of fire drills that take place was available, with the most recent dated fire drill recorded on 26 February 2025.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers were dated 06 February 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (b) There were no annual maintenance records available for review in relation to the smoke alarms. The documentation available on file was the installation certificate which was dated 15 January 2022.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Company has been out to service smoke alarms. We have organised with company to schedule annual maintenance of smoke alarms.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of annual certificate of servicing/testing dated 16/05/2025.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 26 (1) (b).

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

On the day of the inspection the inspector observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance while in the indoor and outdoor play environments.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 22 pre-school children attending the service on a Full Day care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.