

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022LM001
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Ballinamore Childcare
-------------------------	-----------------------

Address of Service:	Aghadark Road, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim
----------------------------	---

Name of Registered Provider:	Paul Gilmartin
-------------------------------------	----------------

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

Date of Inspection:	26/02/2024
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	67	PM	51
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

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 M. Farrell
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Ballinamore Childcare is a community run service located in a renovated vocational school. The service consists of five playrooms, which were all operating on the day of the inspection. There is an outdoor area to the side of the building. The children also have access to an enclosed grassed area accessed via the carpark at the rear of the building. The service is located on the outskirts of Ballinamore town in County Leitrim.

Staffing

On the day of inspection 15 adults were working in the service with 12 adults working directly with children. The person in charge is an operations director who does not work directly with the children. One adult worked in the kitchen and one adult was employed in a maintenance role. There were two students on educational placement in the service at the time of the inspection.

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, 19, 23, 24, 25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, 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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) On review of rosters, there was always a person in charge or designated person in charge available.
 - (c) The adults showed awareness through discussion with the inspectors of the management structure in the service and their role and lines of authority.
- (2)
- The inspectors were informed by the person in charge that that there were 19 staff and two students in the service at the time of the inspection. It was confirmed that the vetting documentation for 12 of the staff had been reviewed during previous inspection in the service and were found to be compliant under this regulation. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the Seven adults new to the service since the last focused inspection of the 28th of June 2023:
- (a) Five written and verified past employer references were available.
 - (b) Two references from a source other than a past employer were available.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosure was obtained for all 19 adults employed in the service. 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 available for two adults employed in the service that had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

- (4) Four 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, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) and (b)

Three adults employed in the service required references and two adult's reference required to be validated.

- (d) International police vetting was required for one adult who had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)

(a)(b) References for staff have been validated. Policy reviewed and suitable for purpose. Further recruitment procedure to involve more timeous validation of references.

(d) International police vetting has been applied for and will be sent to the inspectorate once received.

Supporting documentation submitted

Validated references submitted.

International police vetting not submitted at the time of writing the report.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the person in charge on behalf of the registered provider have been reviewed by the inspectorate and the non-compliances found on inspection have partly been resolved.

International police vetting remains outstanding for one adult.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were 11 adults working directly with 67 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection and 9 adults working directly with 51 children in the afternoon. There was two additional staff members available to cover breaks throughout the day.

The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as follows:

- Toddler town care-room: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged between two and three years of age in the morning and two adults cared for 12 children in the afternoon.
- Little stars care-room: Two adults cared for one child under one year and five children aged between one and two years of age in the morning and afternoon.
- Wobbler care-room: 3 adults cared for 10 children aged between one and two years of age during the day.
- Mini-movers care-room: 2 adults cared for 19 children aged from three and four years of age in the morning. In the afternoon the children from both the Mini-movers and Rainbows care-rooms played together outside with 3 staff caring for 23 children aged from 3 to 5 years.
- Rainbows care-room: Two adults cared for 20 children aged from four and five years of age in the morning.

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

(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) (a)

On the day of inspection five care-rooms were in operation in the service. All care-rooms had children's artwork decorating the walls. In the Toddler town care-room interest areas included construction areas with trucks, cars and tracks, sensory play areas with sand and water, home areas with kitchens stocked with food and utensils for role play and imagination. The Little stars care-room was resourced with equipment suitable to the age and stage of development of the younger child in this rooms, with animals, musical instruments, building blocks, soft toys and puzzles. All equipment was stored on open shelving at children's heights so that choice can be facilitated. The children attending the Mini-movers and Rainbow care-rooms played with a variety of toys that were accessible in low level storage units allowing children to select toys and replace them after use promoting their independence. For example, children chose to play with farm animals at a sensory table in the Rainbows care-room and children in the Mini-movers room enjoyed playing with a wooden train track. The staff in the Rainbows care-room played music that the children and staff danced to prior to the children attending sessional services going home. The staff explained to the inspector how activities were planned depending on children's interests. For example, a recent theme had been based on the human body that the children had enjoyed with a nurse visiting the session to engage with the children.

During the inspection, the children spent a substantial amount of time in the outdoor play area that provided an alternative change of environment for the children. There were two separate outdoor areas. One area used by the older children was resourced with swings, slides, a large wooden climbing frame supporting development of gross motor skills. Imaginary play was facilitated in the wooden framed shops and busses. Children could avail of sensory play in the sand pits. Ride on toys were also available. Adjacent

to the Wobbler room, was a smaller enclosed outdoor area with an impact absorbing ground material. This area was used by the younger child and resources included kitchens, tool bench, play house and various ride on toys suitable to the age and development stage of the child. The enclosed grassed area accessed via the carpark at the rear of the building was not in use at the time of the inspection.

Staff members were observed to be respectful, gentle, and kind in their interactions towards the children in their care. During mealtimes the staff members sat with the children at tables and engaged in conversation with children promoting a relaxed atmosphere. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves. The younger children were held and comforted by staff when needed throughout the day. There was an emphasis on the promotion of the Irish language in the service with a dedicated staff member working between the rooms encouraging the use of Irish in conversation.

The service took measures to support the children's relationships including keeping parents and guardians informed of the daily activities. This was supported using an electronic application where parents received real time information in relation to the children's eating, sleeping and nappy changing. Pictures of families were displayed on the walls in the care rooms ensured children's connection to home was maintained.

The service operated a three-week dinner meal plan which was circulated to families in advance. On the day of inspection, a main meal of pasta and tomato sauce with cheese was served. Other main meals on the menu included Beef stew, Chicken casserole, Bacon and cabbage, and Roast pork, mash and vegetables. This meal was pureed for the younger children. Children who availed of the sessional service brought in their morning snacks from home and these included varieties of prepared fruits, sandwiches, yoghurts and cheese. An afternoon snack of scones was provided. Drinking water was freely available throughout the day and stored on shelving easily accessible to children in the care rooms.

(1) (b)

Nappy changing was observed and positive engagement and interaction with the children were noted throughout this process. The older children who were able to use the toilet independently were prompted to do so and supervised from a distance.

The sleep needs of the younger children were met. This was observed on the day with children sleeping at a structured time of 12.30 to 14.30 hours in Toddler town and the Wobbler sleep rooms. In the Little stars room, sleep times were based on need for the younger child, with staff members responding to children's cues of tiredness. Two sleep room were in use in the service and cots were assigned to individual children. Sleep was monitored with physical checks by staff at a minimum of every ten minutes for the children in

the dedicated sleep rooms. The older children in the Toddler town care-room who required sleep were provided with floor beds in the room with the room was darkened, and children prepared for rest time by removing some clothing. Children had a book to look at and when a timer went off, children put their books down as it was time for rest. Staff members supported children by rubbing backs if required prior to sleep. Staff members remained in the room for the duration of sleep time.

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 entrance into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of preschool children. Additional supplies of cleaning products were stored in the utility room and were inaccessible to the children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins stored out of reach of children.
- Blind cords were secured out of reach of the children in the care-rooms.

Infection Control:

- There were adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning checklists recorded on an electronic application.
- Child friendly hand wash posters with picture instructions were placed above the wash basins.
- Infant formula was sent in from home and stored in the refrigerator before use and heated in a bottle warmer.
- Childrens soothers were stored in individual sterile containers.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection, however during discussion with inspectors the staff showed aware of the procedures in place for administering medication if required.
- A support plan regarding a child's allergy was clearly displayed with a clear procedure of what to do in case of an emergency.

Safe Sleep:

- A dedicated sleep room adjacent to the Little stars care-room held six standard cots and the sleep room next to the Wobbler care-room had 10 standard cots for children to sleep in.
- Low level floor beds were available for those children aged over two years of age.
- The Little star sleep room air temperatures measured 16.9°C and the Wobbler sleep room air temperature was recorded at 17.1 °C during the inspection which is line with the required safe sleep temperatures of 16-20°C.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Little stars care-room a child was placed in a bouncer to support feeding at mealtimes. A highchair with a five-point harness is required to ensure the child is in the correct position and to prevent choking at mealtimes. It is acknowledged that when brought to the attention of the staff on duty, the child was removed from the bouncer.
2. There was an unsecured large wooden pallet stored on its side beside a wall in the outdoor area that posed a risk of injury to a child.

3. Some of the black underlay in the wooden bark area of the outdoor space used by the older children was exposed and presented potential trip hazards.

Infection Control:

4. Hand hygiene was not carried out in the Little stars care-room prior to mealtimes.
5. The lid of a foot pedal bin in one of the sanitary areas used by the adults was broken and required repair or replacement.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The bouncy chair has been removed and an appropriate highchair has been purchased. Staff have been reminded about feeding procedures in the baby room.
2. Wooden pallet has been removed. There will be a management walkaround and staff delegation to handyman to ensure no dangers are present again.
3. New playground covering pour has been ordered. This should not be an issue once ground work completed.

Infection Control:

4. The necessity for appropriate hand hygiene was explained to staff. There will be regular checks prior to mealtimes to ensure hands are being washed.
5. New rubbish bin ordered and old one removed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Copy of Invoice submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.
3. Copy of invoice submitted.

Infection Control:

1. Documentary evidence submitted.
2. Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the person acting on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed by the inspectorate and the non-compliances found on inspection have been resolved. This regulation is now compliant.

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) The registered provider ensured that all children were recorded when entering and leaving the service.
An attendance book was used to record attendance as well as recording on an electronic application.
- (2) The registered provider ensured all visitors to the service were recorded in a book which recorded the name of the visitor and reason for entry 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) On the day of inspection three staff members on duty were trained in first aider response (FAR) training and were available to children attending the preschool service.

(2) (a) (b)

Appropriately stocked first aid boxes were located in the hallways of the service and were available to the children at all times

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(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) (b) Written confirmation of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment dated for the 27 October 2023 and the smoke alarms/fire detection system dated the 15 December 2023 were available in the service.

(2) (c) The fire drill, firefighting equipment and smoke alarm records were made available to the inspectors by the designated person in charge on request.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the playroom.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a) A record of fire drills undertaken in the service was available however the drills were not recorded as having been undertaken monthly which potentially put the safety of children at risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (a) Fire drills will be recorded in a compliant manner. Management have discussed the fire drill regime and will now complete on the first Friday of every month.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the person in charge acting on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed and the non-compliances found upon inspection have been resolved. This regulation is now compliant and will be reviewed on next inspection.