

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024KY009SA
Name of School Age Service:	Balloonagh Gate Lodge After-school
Name of Registered Provider(s):	Susan Quirke Crowley
Address of School Age Service:	The Gate Lodge, Balloonagh, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Eircode:	V92 F950

Date of Inspection:	28 May 2026			
Number of school age children present during inspection:	AM	N/A	PM	41

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick, V94 XT5F
Inspection undertaken by:	S O'Brien
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect
Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:	Balloonagh Gate Lodge After-School is a privately operated school age care service located in Tralee, Kerry. The service caters for children aged 4 to 15 years. The service operates from 7am to 9am and 1.30pm to 6.15pm, Monday to Friday during term time. The service also operates from 7am to
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6.16pm, Monday to Friday during non-term time. The service uses the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. The service consists of small rooms called ateliers based on different aspects of learning such as drama, art, science, and music which are located to the front of the building. There is a large room at the rear of the building which is called Busy Bees which has direct access to the outdoor area. A large log cabin room called Casa del Babino is located at the rear of building. There are outdoor areas located around the building with direct access from all the care rooms.

Staffing:

There are seven staff members employed in the service which includes the registered provider. On the day of inspection, seven staff members were present.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- a) caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- b) provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational, and recreational in

manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and

- c) the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, registered provider and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On inspection, the registered provider was found compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures
- Regulation 9(2): Staffing levels
- Regulation 11(a): Premises
- Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.

(2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

- (1) There were seven staff files reviewed including the file of the registered provider.
- (a) Nine of the references available were from a past employer and were validated.
- (b) Five of the references available were from another source and were validated.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all seven staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required for any staff member as they had not lived outside of Ireland for longer than six consecutive months.
- (2) The procedures outlined above were carried out prior to each staff member being appointed, assigned or allowed access to the school age children.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.

Regulatory Requirement Met

- (2) There were 41 children being cared for by 5 staff members, therefore the minimum adult to child ratios were being adhered to for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider and the service manager were also available to provide support to the staff as needed.

Regulation 11: Premises

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that-

(a) an outdoor space to which the school age children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

Regulatory Requirement Met

(a) There were large outdoor spaces available to the children on a daily basis which were located on the premises. The children were observed spending time in the outdoor areas which consisted of astroturf and grassed surfaces. The children had various materials to play with in the areas. The children were observed playing car wash with ride on cars, playing with sand and construction blocks in the outdoor areas.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

- Four staff members held an in-date certificate in First Aid Responder and were available to the children in the event of a medical attention being required.
- The staff were observed interacting with the children in a kind and respectful manner and were available to the children to provide support during activities. The staff were observed chatting to the children throughout the inspection.
- The service was observed to be a relaxed environment for the children to learn and play. Various materials and areas were available to the children. Children were observed freely moving from indoors and outdoors and partaking in activities of choice. The staff outlined the importance of giving the children the space to learn and play and to respect their opinions and choice.

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- The staff outlined the importance of inclusion and diversity within the service. The service respected the ethnic backgrounds of all children.