

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2024TY001 | | | | |
| Name of Service: | Abc Preschool Scoil Ailbhe | | | | |
| Address of Service: | Parnell street, Thurles, Co Tipperary | | | | |
| Eircode: | E41 XY10 | | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Norah Commins | | | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional | | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 22/01/2025 | | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>12</td> <td>PM</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table> | AM | 12 | PM | 10 |
| AM | 12 | PM | 10 | | |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary | | | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | L McGeeney | | | | |
| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

This full day care service was established in August 2024 to provide care and education to children aged between 3 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided. The service operates Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm for 38 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour session which operates between 9am and 12pm and is funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children. The service is set up to cater for children in their second ECCE year.

Both the pre-school and school age care services are operated from rooms in Scoil Ailbhe national school in the town of Thurles in north Tipperary. There is one room dedicated to the pre-school service and a second room that is used by the school age care service in the afternoon and as the dining room for the pre-school service at midday. The children also have access to the school hall and library. There is an enclosed outdoor play area outside the pre-school room to which the children in the service have exclusive access. They also have access to the rest of the school grounds, when not being used by the school children, including a playground at the front of the premises, playing pitches, walking track and wilderness area. This is a sister service to ABC Pre-school in Friar Street, Thurles.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service but visits daily to deliver meals and is available to call on when required. The registered provider was present on the day of inspection to facilitate the inspection.

The service manager is the person in charge on a daily basis and, with two other staff, work directly with the children each day.

All staff who work in the service hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 15, 19(1)(a) and 23.

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, 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

(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

The staff files of the three members of staff employed in the service were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of each member of staff.

(b) Not applicable as the available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. The service had a process in place to ensure that staff were re-vetted on a three-yearly basis in line with the requirements of the Early Years Inspectorate.

(d) Police vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months and relevant documents were maintained on file.

(4) All staff who worked in the service held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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) There were 3 staff working directly with 12 children aged between 3 and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection. By midday, there were 10 children present in the service being supervised by 2 members of staff. There were three staff employed in the service until 3.30pm, which enabled staff to take their breaks while ensuring that there were at least 2 staff working with the children at all times.

(2) and (4) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 to 4 for the morning session, which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 to 11.

In the afternoon, there were at least 2 staff working with the children, so that the adult to child ratio was 1 to 5, which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 to 8.

The adult to child ratio requirements changed from sessional service requirements in the morning to full day service requirements once the session had ended. The adult to child ratios were maintained at greater than the minimum requirements throughout the day.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service while it was in operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

The registration forms of the 15 children enrolled in the service were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(1) The information specified under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation was maintained in writing in respect of each child who attended the service.

(3)(c) The records were available on the premises for inspection by an authorised person.

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) The following was observed on the day of inspection through direct observation, review of records and discussions with staff:

Basic needs of the child:

The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors and outdoors. The indoor environment was spacious and well laid out to support the free movement of the children between and within the interest areas. The children enjoyed a long period of outdoor play which included time spent in the dedicated play area near their room and on the walking track around the playing pitches. The children who attended on a full day care basis benefitted from a change of indoor environment by moving to the dining room/school aged care room for their dinner at midday.

All of the children were toilet trained and were able to use the toilet independently. The staff accompanied the children when they went to the sanitary accommodation area which was close to the pre-school room. This allowed them to supervise the children, provide assistance if required and remind them to wash their hands. The children brought drink bottles which they had access to throughout the day. Staff refilled the bottles with water as required.

There was a relaxation area in the pre-school room which was separated from the rest of the room by a wooden frame and canopy. This created a cosy space that the children enjoyed retreating to for quiet play or to read a book and rest away from the general play area.

There was a box of tissues, a mirror, bin and wet wipes on a table in the pre-school room which the children could use to clean their noses and faces as required during the day.

Supporting Relationships

A 'key worker' system was in operation in the service. Each member of staff worked with all of the children but were specifically responsible for supporting the well-being and learning of a small group of children.

The children were given many opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities within the service. For example, there was a chart on the wall near the entrance door with a photo of each child and another of their home. On

arrival each morning the children moved their photo from the 'home' slot to the 'in preschool' slot on the chart to mark themselves present. Each child that was present received a different job that they were responsible for carrying out for the day. Jobs included: line leader, weather monitor and recycle chief. Other tasks included: giving out the lunches, choosing the book for story time, helping to sweep the floor and cleaning the mirror in the dress-up area. The children demonstrated eagerness and pride in carrying out their daily tasks.

Staff communicated with the children's parents regularly through meeting them at drop-off and collection times and via a private group messaging service.

The staff had made individual books for each child called 'All About Me', which contained photos of the children, their families, pets and favourite things and a simple story about each child. These books were kept in the cosy area with the rest of the story books and staff said that the children loved looking through their book.

The atmosphere in the room on the day of inspection was one of happy activity. The children appeared to be confident and content in their interactions with their friends and the staff, in choosing what they wanted to explore and engage with and in expressing their ideas, needs and desires.

On the day of inspection the school librarian visited the pre-school with a selection of books from the school library that she thought the children would enjoy. Staff said that the librarian visited at least once a week, and the children looked forward to her visits.

Physical and Material Environment

The toys, materials, furniture and equipment for the service were purchased specifically for this service and were new, of good quality and in very good condition.

The pre-school room and outdoor spaces were well resourced and laid out. Interest areas in the pre-school room included: home corner and shop, small world areas, art area, sensory and thematic area, manipulative play areas, table-top activities and dining areas, work bench and puzzles area. The sink unit in the corner of the room was used for water play as well as for hand washing.

The outdoor area adjacent to the pre-school room was equipped with sand and water tables, basketball hoop, balance beams, wall mounted blackboards, balls and vehicles. There were climbing and sliding activity units, ride-on toys and goal nets in play area at the front of the premises.

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 school building was kept secured. Entry to the premises by parents or members of the public was through the front door, where there was an office and receptionist. Other access doors to the premises were secured but could be opened from the outside by staff who had the code for the keypad locks.

There were gates at the front of the premises that were closed once all of the children had arrived in the morning. This ensured that children could not gain unsupervised access to the roadway in front of the premises. There was a tall, narrow, metal gate at the side of the premises that separated the outdoor area at the front of the premises from the grounds at the back. This gate was closed when the children used the outdoor play area near their room. The climbing and sliding equipment were sited in an area with a bark-mulch surface to provide a soft-fall surface beneath and around the equipment.

Hot water for hand washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C.

Infection control:

The service had a policy on the prevention and control of spread of infection, which included a hand washing policy and a cleaning policy.

The staff were observed to practice 'clean as you go', for example, the floors were swept after lunch and tables were cleaned down as required such as after messy activities and before eating.

The staff and children were observed to practice effective hand hygiene. There was a sink in the pre-school room where the children could wash their hands as well as the row of sinks in the sanitary accommodation area which was the usual place the children used for hand washing. Staff supervised the children during hand washing and were available to help if required. The children washed their hands before eating, after returning indoors from outdoor play and after using the toilet.

Administration of medication:

The service had a policy regarding the administration of medication to children and a medication book for recording the administration of medication to children. Signed parental consent was sought prior to any medication being given to a child.

Safe sleep:

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Not applicable to this service as the children attending were aged over 3.5 years old and did not take daytime sleeps.

Fire safety:

Fire escape routes were kept clear of obstruction. The pre-school room was located beside two fire exit doors, which were accessed via wide corridors.