

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025DL004
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Name of Service:	Shelly's Childcare Ltd.
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Address of Service:	1 Dunree Centre, St. Mary's Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 CKC6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle McKenna
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	34
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan
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

Shelly's Childcare Ltd. is a privately owned early years' service located in Buncrana Co. Donegal. The service is registered to provide sessional, part time and full day care for children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service is open from 07:30 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. The premises comprises of two care rooms, sanitary accommodation for children and staff, a kitchen, an office and a staff room. An enclosed outdoor area is available to the front of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service. There are eleven adults employed to work in the service. On the day of inspection, ten adults were present. Of the ten adults, seven work with the children on a daily basis. The deputy person in charge oversees the day to day running of the service and is available to provide support in the event of staff absences. Two adults are employed for kitchen duties.

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 and health, welfare and development of child. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11 and 19. 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 inspector wishes 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,*

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(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 named person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(1)(b)

A review of the staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or deputy person in charge were rostered to be on the premises during the hours of operation.

(1)(c)

The person in charge confirmed that there was a clear line of authority within the service.

Twelve staff files were reviewed including the registered providers and the following information was available:

(2)(a) Fifteen written and validated references were available from past employers for ten of the adults.

(2)(b) Nine written and validated references were available from reputable sources for seven of the adults.

(2)(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(2)(d) International police vetting was available for two adults who had resided outside of the state for a period of six consecutive months or more as an adult.

(4) Ten 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.

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Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

There was no police vetting on file for one adult whose employment record indicated they had lived outside of the state for longer than six months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Police Vetting obtained for one adult.

In the future we will ensure if an employee has lived out of the state for longer than 6 months, we will obtain vetting from that country.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

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

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.

(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).

Compliance Information

(1)

On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(4) On the morning of the inspection the following ratios were observed:

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- In the junior preschool room, three adults cared for twenty-one children aged 3 years and 2 months to 4 years.
- In the senior preschool room, three adults cared for eighteen children aged between 4 years and 2 months to 5 years and 2 months.

In the afternoon:

- In the junior preschool room, two adults cared for sixteen children aged 3 years and 2 months to 4 years.
- In the senior preschool room, three adults cared for eighteen children aged between 4 years and 2 months to 5 years and 2 months.

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

Basic Need

- The service provides all meals and snacks to the children in sessional, part time and full day care. All food is freshly prepared on site and was served at regular intervals.
- On the day of the inspection, breakfast was cereal with milk, morning snack was apple and sultana bread. Lunch was sandwiches with fruit and yogurt. Dinner was sausages, beans and mashed potatoes.
- Fresh drinking water was available to the children in each room throughout the day.
- On the day of the inspection, children in both groups had access to the outdoor area.
- Suitable warm and waterproof clothing was available for children playing outdoors.

Supporting relationships

- The service has a key worker system in place with each staff member assigned a group of children to form close relationships with.
- Staff advised that communication with parents takes place at drop off and pick up times.

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- Interactions between the staff and the children were warm and supportive, staff encouraged children in their activities and praised their achievements.
- There was evidence of teamwork among the staff team, with staff collaborating throughout the day in relation to the children's needs, interests and activities.
- Pictures of the children and their families were displayed on the walls to support the children's sense of belonging.
- Children were supported through transitions in the service with staff providing verbal and visual cues to upcoming changes in the daily routine such as going outdoors, tidy up time and mealtimes.
- Staff supported children's choice in the service, for example after the tidy up song has finished, some of the children requested "more music and dancing" and the staff member obliged and provided additional songs.

Physical and material environment

The Junior preschool room contained a range of developmentally appropriate materials and activities for the children.

Materials such as puzzles and jigsaws, plastic bricks, wooden construction blocks and magnet boards were stored neatly on low shelving and were easily accessed by the children. To develop children's imagination, small world play toys such as garages, dolls houses were available as well as a home corner and hairdresser area. Sensory trays containing sand and play dough were available to the children throughout the day.

Artwork recently completed by the children for Valentines Day was displayed on the walls. To support language development educational posters naming the days of the week, numbers, colours were displayed as well as the LAMH sign the children were learning.

The room was bright and spacious, allowing the children to room to play and move freely between activities of their choosing.

The Senior preschool room catered for children aged 4 to 5 years. The children moved freely between the different interest areas in the room and chose what to play with. A sensory table with blue rice and sea animals , a table with magnet boards, sand and water tables, fine motor practice area, small word activities such as a farmyard and a garage with vehicles were set up to encourage children's interest. Toys such as plastic bricks, musical instruments and puzzles were on low shelving and accessible to all of the children. Small sofas and a library area provided a quiet space for children who wished to rest.

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Outdoor area

All children had access to the outdoor area on the day of inspection. Children were observed to play energetically on balance bikes and ride on toys, with staff ensuring the children wore helmets. Sports equipment such as a tennis game and footballs were available to the children.

Programme of activities

In the Junior preschool room, the learning theme for the week was “Dentist week” and activities to support children’s learning were available to the children, such as a dentist costume and play set, a playdough activity of a mouth and crafted teeth, a fine motor threading activity of laminated toothpaste, toothbrush and teeth.

A “steps to toothbrushing” visual aid was on display.

In the senior preschool room, staff followed interests for example, when the children began to make “pancakes” out of play dough, staff encouraged the children to try to flip the playdough using utensils from the home corner kitchen. Items in the room were labelled to encourage language development among the children.