

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025MO001
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Cnoc na nÓg
-------------------------	-------------

Address of Service:	Ss. Peter & Paul N.S., Knockafall, Straide, Co. Mayo
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	F26 E927
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Caithriona Murrelly
-------------------------------------	---------------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	20/10/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	5	PM	-
-----------------------------------	----	---	----	---

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Cnoc na nÓg is a sessional service located on a school campus in a rural area in Straide, County Mayo. The service is a hybrid service with a mix of outdoor and indoor service provision and is registered to cater for children from 2 to 6 years of age. Morning sessions are provided from 9:00-12:00hours. There is a new demountable single storey building with one care-room. Separate sanitary facilities are provided in a structure beside the care-room. A large outdoor space with a sheltered area and play equipment is provided for the children to play outdoors.

Staffing

There are two adults in the service including the service manager and the registered provider who at present provides relief cover if needed.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

(2) Discussion with the registered provider and review of records found that there were two adults in the service at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documentation was available for the staff:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for the two adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the two adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting documents were not required or the two staff who had not lived outside of the State for more than six months as an adult.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the two adults who worked directly with the children.

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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Throughout the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service. On the inspector's announced arrival to the service there was 1 adult working directly with 5 children. A second adult was present in the service and worked with the children for periods of the inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio for sessional services providing care to children over 2 ½ years of 1 adult to each 11 children was adhered to with 1 to 2 adults working directly with 5 children during the inspection.

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) In line with the service's outdoor play philosophy, the children spent the session playing outdoors with a variety of toys and play equipment available to them at low levels. The children wore wellington boots, outdoor waterproof suits and jackets suitable for playing outdoors in the weather on the day. The staff had adopted a "curiosity approach" and followed children's emerging interests in the setting with the easy access of the play equipment supporting this approach. When children "answered" a toy recycled telephone, the staff joined in the children's conversations with imaginary people. The home area where the children played at times had real life items such as metal pans and wooden rolling pins which appealed to the children. When the inspector arrived at the service, one of the staff was sitting with a group of children painting paper doilies and "designing clothes" with soft music playing in the background. Up to date painting colour charts for homes were available to expand and develop children's knowledge of colours. The staff were observed to encourage the children to use their imaginations. For example, at story time they were given the opportunity to look at the pictures in the story book about animals and provide comments on their observations developing their own story. The children wanted to make a farm after the story was finished, and the staff involved themselves with the children in the creation of the farm. The children moved around unrestricted outdoors and had free choice of the different toys and equipment to play with. Some children played on ride on toys while others choose to play with a doll that the children had named. At times children wandered over to the waterplay table and played with the water and toys set up for play. Other children played in groups with a transport system running little toy cars along "ramps" positioned at different heights. Children showed the inspector the service's wooden woodland animals including a badger, fox and stoat and asked her to name them.

The staff were positive in their approaches to behaviour management using for example positive role modelling and discussing the concept of sharing if disagreements occurred over toys. The staff showed insight and knowledge of the children's individual likes and interests such as helicopters and firemen and used them to develop children's play. The staff praised the children for their efforts and achievements during play. A recap session was held towards the end of the day where the children discussed their

favourite activities from the session. At home-time the staff were observed to greet the parents/guardians warmly and share information relating to their child's day with them.

The children did not play in the care-room on the day of inspection. The care-room was laid out in child accessible defined interest areas including a section with numerous tabletop activities. The children's snacks were stored in the care-room's refrigerator on their arrival to the service. The snacks were eaten outdoors at a table under the outdoor sheltered area midway through the session. Snacks included foods such as prepared fruits, vegetables, meat, yoghurt, brown bread and crackers. The staff sat with the children to supervise them closely when eating and encouraged conversations between the children. Each child had their own individual drink container that was available to them throughout the session at a drink station that had been set up outdoors. There were soft wipeable coloured mats for children to rest on if they wished and were not observed to be used during the session.

The staff provided information packs to parents before their children started in the service including information on the service's policies and procedures, for example, in relation to healthy eating and behaviour management. Electronic applications were used to communicate with parents with photographs of children and information regarding activities they had undertaken sent to parents on a weekly basis. The staff had developed template individual scrapbooks for the children to include information and observations of their progress in the service. The registered provider informed the inspector that there were plans in place to hold individual meetings with parents to discuss progress during the preschool year. A recent open day had been held to celebrate the service's opening helping to establish and develop links between the service, families, school and community.

The staff were observed to support and encourage the children to be as independent as possible for example using the toilet by themselves as appropriate to their developmental stages. The staff supervised the children washing their hands at key times such as before snack time and prompted them to dry their hands carefully and dispose of wastepaper towel in the bins provided. Each child had an individual plastic storage unit for storage of personal items accessible at low levels in the sanitary area.