

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC003
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Name of Service:	A Breath of Fresh Air Full Day Care
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Address of Service:	Aghamarta, Carrigaline, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P43 AX75
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ailish Thompson
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	19
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Building, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork, T23X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter
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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Description of service

A Breath of Fresh Air is a privately run early years service registered to provide full day care, part time and sessional care for children aged from 6 months to 6 years. The service is based in a rural area and operates from a detached two storey building that was adapted as a childcare facility. Daily opening hours are from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

It has two care rooms in operation, namely, the Creche room which is situated on the ground floor, and the Junior Montessori room which is situated on the second floor. There is a dedicated sleep room, a kitchen/dining room and an outdoor area, adjacent to the Creche room. The service is one of three services operated by the registered provider.

Staffing

There are thirteen staff attached to the service including the registered provider who is not service based. On the day of inspection, there were eight staff working directly with the early years children. There were two named persons in charge, one of whom was office based and the other who provided lunch cover in the rooms.

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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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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) The registered provider has ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge as well as the deputy person in charge were on the premises for the duration of the inspection. The roster for the service demonstrated that at least one of these people were always on site.

(c) A notice board in the hallway held photographs and descriptions of each staff member, along with their role and responsibility. This information made clear the management structure in place.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that six new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. All six new staff members work directly with the children, and a total of six files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for five staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

(a) Seven of the twelve required references were available from a past employer and had been validated.

(b) Five of the twelve required references were available and validated from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all for eleven staff. 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 required and available for one member of staff as they had resided outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4)

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Documentary evidence was available for the six new members of staff evidencing that each held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.

(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)

The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

(2)

On the day of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations.

- There were 20 children between the ages of 11 months to 3 years being cared for by 7 adults in the morning.
- There were 19 children between the ages of 1 to 3 years being cared for by 7 adults in the afternoon.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two people on the premises at any time. This was evidenced through the inspection of staff rosters.

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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

Physical and Material Environment:

- The two care rooms in use were warm, comfortable and furnished with child sized tables, chairs, low shelving and a variety of play equipment that met the needs of the children.
- Varied interest areas were set up in each of the two care rooms such as sensory areas, rest areas, home areas, construction play area, arts and crafts areas, tabletop activities, and library areas. The adults supported the children to participate in the activities that they the children were interested in and provided them with opportunities to be creative and learn with their peers.
- The walls of the two care rooms were decorated with family walls and birthday charts.
- There was a developed rest area provided in each of the two care rooms.
- The layout of the care rooms afforded children the ability to move freely, as they initiated and participated in various activities. Both outdoor play spaces were also utilised during the morning.

Basic needs:

- The creche children were accommodated to have a snack break at 10.10am in the dining room. During this time, the staff members were observed to sit alongside and supervise the children and offered assistance as required. Shortly after midday, the hot meal was facilitated in the same room. The children in the Junior Montessori room had their meals in their care room and staff were observed to sit and chat with children at this time.
- The meals observed were nutritious and balanced. Staff stated that extra food was available should any child forget their lunch or require extra.
- Staff were observed to be led by the children's cues. For example, a child in the creche room was displaying signs of tiredness and a staff member brought the child to the sleep room to nap. This child's hot meal was then facilitated outside of the routine times.
- The children's reusable water bottles were available within their reach, stored on low level tables in each room.

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- The children in Junior Montessori's independent use of the sanitary facilities was encouraged, with supervision and verbal prompts provided by the adults, as the need arose.
- The children utilised the outdoor play area on the day of inspection.
- Suitable outdoor clothing and footwear were worn by the children, as they explored and played in the outdoor environments.
- Young children who needed extra support and comfort were observed to be given this by responsive adults.

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 external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised.
- The external doors were secured to restrict unauthorised access.
- The children's bags and coats were stored safely off the floor.
- Windows in each care room had been made safe to prevent children from exiting or falling.
- The ten high chairs in the dining room were in a good condition and had been fitted with safety harnesses.
- The outdoor area was securely fenced to prevent unauthorised access.
- Flexes and cables were observed to be out of reach of children.
- Windows and low-level doors were fitted with visibility strips.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- The stairs had a suitable handrail, was well lit and had appropriate flooring.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use throughout the service.
- Each sanitary area was fitted with liquid soap and paper towels.
- Perishable food was safely refrigerated.
- Windows were open in the care rooms to aid natural ventilation.
- Staff were observed to wear disposable gloves and aprons when changing nappies.

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- Barrier creams were individually labelled for children who may require them
- Cots were fitted with mattress protectors to prevent the spread of infection.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had a supply of fever reducing medication available and stored out of reach of children.
- Staff stated they were aware of the procedure to follow in administering medication.
- A detailed care plan was available for one child along with emergency medication.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were observed to sleep in suitable sleep equipment.
- Sleep plans were available for children moving from a cot to a floor bed.
- Room temperatures were recorded at 20.5°C while children over 1 year were sleeping.
- Staff were observed to physically check sleeping children every 10 minutes and record their observations.
- These sleep checks were available for review by the inspector.
- Staff remained in the room with children who slept on floor beds.
- Cots were maintained in a proper state of repair.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection.
- Wall tethered firefighting equipment was available throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Staff stated that powdered infant formula was made up on site for one child. A tin of formula was observed in the dining area. The practice of making up formula on site may pose a risk of contamination of the formula for infants under 1 year.

Infection Control:

2. There was no hot water available in the service on the day of inspection. Water temperatures were recorded at 19.9°C. Staff stated they were aware of an issue with the boiler. The lack of hot water may pose a risk of cross infection due to the inability to effectively wash hands of children and staff.

3. Handwashing practices were observed to be poor on the day of inspection. Children returned from outdoor play and were not instructed or supported to wash their hands. Children were brought into the dining area to eat their mid-morning snack at 10:10am and to eat their lunch at 12pm without washing their hands. Failure to wash hands prior to eating may pose a risk of cross infection.

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Safe Sleep:

4. The required 50cm space between cots and floor beds was not observed in the sleep area. This may pose a risk of infection control.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

In their written response the registered provider stated:

General Safety:

1. The infant formula was returned to the parents and parents are now asked to send prepared bottles into the service.

Infection Control:

2. A plumber has been contracted to fix the boiler to ensure hot water will be available. The immersion hot water heater is now in use and staff have been asked to turn it on each morning to ensure hot water is available throughout the day.

3. Staff have been reminded of the importance of correct hand washing practices and signs have been placed strategically in the service to remind staff and children.

Safe Sleep:

4. Cots have been moved to ensure 50cm space remains between them. A sign has been put up to remind staff of this.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. The registered providers statement is accepted as proof.

Infection Control:

2. A photograph of the new sign reminding staff to turn on the immersion water heater.

3. Photographic evidence of the new posters displayed to remind staff and children to wash their hands regularly.

Safe Sleep:

4. Photographic evidence of the sleep room and posters reminding staff to ensure a 50cm distance between each cot.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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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-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
- (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)
- (a) The registered provider has kept a written log of monthly fire drills. Through inspection of records, it was observed that fire drills take place bi-monthly with the last recorded fire drill taking place on 14 August 2026.
 - (b) the registered provider has kept a written log of all firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. It was observed that all firefighting equipment has been serviced and maintained. The smoke alarm system was last tested in November 2025, and the fire extinguishers were last tested in January 2026.
- (2)
- (a) The registered provider has ensured that all records relating to fire safety are stored safely and are open to inspection by authorised persons.
- (4)
- A notice of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire was prominently displayed in each care room.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured, with insurance for 75 children until 27 March 2027. The records detailed the category of service covered which was full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

(d)

- The outdoor area of the service was well maintained and appeared in a state of good repair.

Non-Compliance Information

- While it is acknowledged that the two care rooms in use by the children appeared to be clean, there were areas in auxiliary rooms which were observed to need routine cleaning. For example;
 - The blinds in the sleep room were observed to have areas of heavy cobwebs with dead insects behind the blinds.
 - The dining area had deposits of food debris in the corners.
 - The ventilation ducts in each of the sanitary accommodations were heavily clogged with dust which would impede the flow of fresh air.
- The hot tap in the sanitary accommodation attached to the Junior Montessori room was broken.
- The floor covering in Junior Montessori was ripped in three places with tape covering one of these areas. The floor was in need of repair in order to be cleaned effectively.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In their written response, the registered provider stated:

1. A deep clean had been undertaken to include the areas listed above. Staff had been reminded of the importance of correct cleaning procedures.
2. A plumber had been contracted to repair the tap in the sanitary accommodation.
3. A contractor had been contacted in relation replacing the floor covering in the Junior Montessori room.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of the dining area, ventilation ducts and sleep room. A new cleaning rota for the service which now includes areas to be deep cleaned.
2. The registered providers statement is accepted as evidence.
3. The registered providers statement is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 29 (e) have been adequately addressed. They will be reassessed at the next inspection.