

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO026
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Name of Service:	Claire Barden Award Winning Childcare Ballymote
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Address of Service:	Cornmill, Gurteen Road, Ballymote, Co. Sligo
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Barden
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	20
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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:	S. killeen
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

This full day care service is located in an urban area in Ballymote, County Sligo. The service is registered to cater for children aged from 0-6 years of age between the hours of 07:30- 18:00. A registered school age service is also provided by the service. The premises is a single storey building purpose built for the provision of childcare services. There are four playrooms, an additional small playroom to the front of the building known as the “library room” a kitchen, sanitary accommodation and a large outdoor play area located to the rear and sides of the building. A log cabin with care room located in the back was not in use on the day of inspection.

Staffing

There is a total of eight adults inclusive of the registered provider employed to work in the service. Eight of the staff work directly with the pre-school children. Five adults were present and working directly with the preschool children on the morning of the inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 1(a)(b), 2(a)(b)(c)(d), 4, 11(1)(2), 15, 1(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i), 3, (c), 5, 16(i)(j) 23, 24, 1, 3(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(b), 4, 26, 1(a)(b) 2(c) 3, 4, 27, 31(a)(b)(c)(d), 32, 1(a)(b)(c) 2

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(a)(b),3(a)(b). These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation, regulation 15 record of a pre-school child, regulation 16(i)(j) record in relation to a pre-school service and regulation 24 checking in and out and record of attendance.

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.

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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*

(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

(1) The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises for the duration of the inspection. A review of staff attendance records the person in charge or the deputy person in charge was present while the service was in operation.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on the inspection and through discussion with the registered provider onsite, it was determined that one adult had been employed since the last inspection on 12 September 2024. The file for one adult was reviewed and found to be compliant.

- (a) One written validated reference was available from past employer for one adult.
- (b) One written validated reference was available from reputable source for one adult.

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- (c) Garda vetting disclosure had been obtained for the recently appointed staff member. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was not required for the file reviewed as the adult had not resided outside of the country for longer than six months.

- (4) Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent, was on file for one adult.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) There were 5 adults working directly with 24 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. A review of staffing rosters showed that an adequate number of adults were planned to work directly with the children during service hours of operation. The registered provider arrived at the service in the afternoon and remained on site.
- (2) The required minimum ratios were maintained throughout the inspection, taking into account the children's ages and the length of time each child attended the service. On the morning of the inspection the following was observed.
- Montessori playroom: Not in operation.
 - Junior Preschool playroom: 1 adult cared for 6 children aged from 2 to 3 years.
 - Wobbler playroom: 1 adult cared for 5 children aged 1-2 years.

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- Preschool 1 playroom: 2 adults cared for 13 children aged from 3 years to 4 years.

In the afternoon the following ratios applied:

- Montessori playroom: Not in operation.
- Junior Preschool playroom: 1 adult cared for 6 children aged from 2 to 3 years.
- Wobbler playroom: 2 adults cared for 5 children aged 1-2 years.
- Preschool 1 playroom: 2 adults cared for 9 children aged 3-4 years.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a-i)

Twelve records of pre-school children attending the service were reviewed. Each record contained all the required information, including authorisation for the collection of the child, details of illness, disability allergy or special needs, emergency contact and details of the child's general practitioner.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available on the premises for inspection by the early year's inspector.

(4)

The person in charge confirmed that the records are retained for the required period as set out in the regulations

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)

- (i) The staff roster detailed the daily attendance of staff members.
- (j) Medication administration records were available for review. A sample of 16 medication administration records was reviewed. Each record contained the details of the medication administration and signed parental consent.

(3) The records were made available on the premises for inspection by the early year's inspector.

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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:

- On arrival to the service, the external doors were secure to prevent an unauthorised person entering the service and children from exiting the service unnoticed.
- The outdoor area was enclosed by high walls, wooden fencing and a bolted gate to prevent children from exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning products used in the service were securely stored to be inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- There was no evidence of hazards in the indoor or outdoor areas, toys and play equipment appeared in good repair and all electrical flexes and cables were in good condition and out of children's reach.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.

Infection Control:

- The pre-school rooms and adjoining sanitary facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up to date cleaning schedules outlining appropriate cleaning methods and the various areas to be cleaned within the playrooms and sanitary accommodation were available.
- Staff members were observed cleaning play areas and frequently touched surfaces after children's use and prior to snack and dinner time.
- Thermostatically controlled water, soap and paper towels was readily available to the pre-school children to wash their hands prior to eating, after both toileting and nappy changes. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.
- The care rooms and sanitary accommodation were adequately ventilated by way of openable windows or mechanical ventilation in cases where no window was available.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.

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Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection. On discussion with the staff members, they were knowledgeable about the service medication policy. Medication consent forms were in place and administration record templates were available if the service required them.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had one designated sleep room containing four standard cots. No children were observed sleeping on the day of the inspection.
- Sleep records were reviewed which documented 10-minute checks are completed on the children.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the setting.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed throughout the setting.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- On the day of inspection, children's hands were not consistently washed following nappy changes. Staff were observed continuing to wear gloves and apron after disposing of a soiled nappy, while putting on a clean nappy and redressing the child. Staff also manually opened and closed the bin lid by hand although its foot operated pedal was in working order. These practices posed a risk of cross infection to the children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- Staff member retrained on nappy change policy and procedure. Designated or deputy person in charge will observe nappy Changes every three months to check for compliance.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- Minutes of training held with staff retrained in effective nappy changing procedures.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 23.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The service demonstrated that all children are checked in on arrival and checked out on departure. A record of these times is maintained in the service.

(3)

(a) On the day of the inspection, the person in charge authorised the inspector's entry. The person in charge confirmed that all visitors and contractors were required to have entry authorised by the person in charge or another staff member.

(b) A record of the visitors and contractors entering the premises was maintained in the services visitor book. The inspector was asked to sign the visitor book on arrival for the unannounced inspection.

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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,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (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) A procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 18 August 2026.
 - (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was dated 01 May 2026. The records for the smoke detection system indicated the last service occurred on 06 September 2025.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) was available and open to inspection by-
- (a) an authorised person.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were observed to be displayed in a conspicuous place within the premises.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that on the day of inspection the children were adequately supervised. The supervision was maintained indoors through appropriate staff deployment, clear sight lines and purposeful movement within the room. The staff members remain attentive and responsive ensuring children are supported guided and protected at all times. During outdoor play staff members are strategically positioning to monitor all areas. Staff actively engage with children, manage risk appropriately and ensure that supervision levels remain consistent across the play area. Appropriate supervision was maintained during personal care routines in a manner that respects children's dignity privacy and individual needs while ensuring safety and well-being. At mealtimes the staff members sat alongside the children, supervising, prompting and offering support if necessary. Sleep checks were completed every 10 minutes for children in cots and continues staff supervision for children on floor beds.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

- (a) the death of a pre-school child while attending the service, including the death of a child in hospital following his or her transfer to hospital from the service;*
- (b) the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981);*
- (c) an incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time;*
- (d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;*
- (e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.*

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Compliance Information

(a-e)

The registered provider confirmed that there had been no requirement to notify Tusla of any incidents as outlined in (a-e). The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to notify Tusla of any incident in relation to (a-e) within the required time frame.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) A complaints policy was in place in the service and adequately outlined the following;
- (a) Details of the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service.
 - (b) Details of the manner by which a complaint will be dealt with by the service.
 - (c) Details of the procedures in place outlining how the person who makes such a complaint in relation to the service will be informed of the manner by which the complaint is being dealt with.

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- (2)
- (a) The person in charge stated that no complaints had been made directly to the service. The registered provider stated that if a complaint was received a record would be kept on record of the complaint.
 - (b) The registered provider stated that they were aware that any complaint made would be dealt with in accordance with the services complaint policy.
- (3)
- (a) The registered provider stated they are aware of their obligation to detail the nature of any complaint made and the manner in which it will be dealt with.
 - (b) The registered provider stated a record of any complaint made will be kept in the service and available for inspection on the premises.