

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY139
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Name of Service:	Play and Learn Creche and Montessori
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Address of Service:	Gort Na Manach, Cahir Road, Clonmel, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E91 YA07
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tracey O'Keeffe
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	66	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Glenmorgan Building, Ferryhouse, Clonmel, Co Tipperary E91RF38
Inspection undertaken by:	Antoinette McNamara, Lisa McGeeney & Andrea Madden
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Play and Learn Creche and Montessori is in a purpose built, two storey premises in the town of Clonmel in Co Tipperary. This full day care service, which caters for children aged 0 to 6 years old, commenced operating in 2006. The hours of opening are 07:30 to 18:00, Monday to Friday, for 51 weeks of the year including a sessional service operated under the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) from 09:00 to 12:00 for 38 weeks of the year for eligible children. The service is located within a large spacious building containing nine early years rooms at both ground and first floor levels. Other facilities include three sleep rooms, kitchen, laundry room, staff room, office, sanitary accommodation areas for staff and children and outdoor play facilities.

Staffing

There are 29 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. The registered provider, manager, housekeeper and maintenance staff are also working in the service but do not work directly with the children. Staff working directly with pre-school children held qualifications in Early Childhood Education at level 5 and above 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 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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Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4) Management and recruitment,
Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing levels,
Regulation 16 (1) (h, i, j, k) (3) Record in relation to pre-school service,
Regulation 20 (1)(a) Facilities for rest and play,
Regulation 22 Food and drink,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of the child,
Regulation 25 (1)(2)(a)(b) First aid
Regulation 26 (1)(a)(b)(4) Fire safety
Regulation 28 Insurance

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 inspectors wish 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

(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)(a) The registered provider is the person in charge and oversees the operation of the childcare facility. A second named person in charge can deputise, as required.

(b) A person in charge was present on the day of inspection. From a review of the rosters a person in charge was present daily.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that 13 new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. A total of 13 files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for 16 staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for each person working at the service.

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- (b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources such as previous schools and colleges.
- (c) Garda vetting was available on file for everyone working in the service. Garda vetting had been renewed, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting documentation was available for two new staff working in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications for the staff working with pre-school children were available on file demonstrating that they held a qualification at level 5 and above 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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care of the children.
- (2) The adult child ratios during the day of inspection met the requirements of the regulations as follows:
- Orange room: eight children cared for by three staff.
 - Montessori red room: eight children cared for by two staff.
 - Montessori blue room: 12 children cared for by 2 staff.
 - Montessori green room: 13 children cared for by 3 staff.
 - Toddler 2: nine children cared for by three staff.
 - Toddler 1: five children cared for by two staff.
 - Playschool: six children cared for by two staff.
 - Wobbler 2: Closed.
 - Wobbler 1: five children cared for by three staff.

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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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (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;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(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)
- (h) Detailed daily attendance of each child was available.
 - (i) A detailed staff roster was available.
 - (j) Medication administration records were sampled and were found to meet the necessary requirements. Written parental consent for staff to administer medication had also been obtained.
 - (k) A total of 10 accident and incident records were sampled and deemed satisfactory.
- (3) The written records were available on the premises for inspection by an authorised person.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Each of the rooms in the service was set up with furniture, toys, equipment and materials suitable to the age and stage of development of the children who used the room and in sufficient quantity for the number of children in each room. Additional toys and equipment were available in storage rooms and along the wide corridors outside the rooms. Play resources were organised into interest areas which included home corners, cosy reading and floor play areas, imaginative play areas, small world areas, mark making, puzzles and table-tops activities areas.

There were outdoor play areas at the back and side of the premises available to the children. There was a timetable for the use of the outdoor play area, however, due to the long spell of sunny days and high temperatures staff were managing the outdoor playtime so that the children got outside in the coolest part of the day or when the outdoor area had the most shade. Equipment and materials outside included construction toys, tyres, ride-on toys, climbing frame and slide, 'rock climbing' wedge, push toys, balls, playhouses and seating. Staff said that the children enjoyed a lot of water play during warm weather.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy. All food and snacks eaten by the children during the day were supplied by their parents. Meals that were to be eaten hot were reheated in the microwave ovens available in the kitchenette area of each room. Perishable food was stored in the fridges in each room. Children brought in their own drink bottles which were refilled with water throughout the day. Children had access to their drink bottles, which were stored on shelves or tables that were accessible to the children.

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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:

The main doors to the childcare areas were locked and needed to be opened from the inside. Staff were required to answer a call bell system to grant access to the service area, therefore children could not exit the service unsupervised and unsupervised visitors could not enter. The outdoor area was to the rear and side of the property and was fully secure, children could not leave the area, and unauthorised persons could not enter. Blind cords were secured to the wall. Cleaning agents and hazardous materials were stored inaccessible to children. The staircase used by children to enter and exit the building was adequately lit and had a non-slip surface. Hot water for hand-washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C, on the day of inspection the hot water was 36°C. There was an impact absorbent surface under outdoor equipment. The service tried to ensure the comfort and safety of the children and staff during the warm summer weather by closing blinds and windows against direct sunlight to help keep the rooms cooler. Children were given drinks of water frequently and kept out of the sun when the day was at its hottest in the afternoon. Staff tried to create additional airflow through the building by the strategic opening of certain doors and windows and the use of electric fans.

Infection control:

There was an infection control policy which included effective handwashing. Staff were observed supervising and teaching the younger children how to wash their hands after using the toilet. The handwashing sinks used by the children were at their height to support independence in washing their hands. Liquid soap and paper towels were also available. The service was kept clean and well maintained.

Safe sleep:

The service had a safe sleep policy. There were designated sleep rooms for children who required a sleep in a cot during their time in the service.

Fire safety:

Fire exits were found to be unobstructed on the day of inspection.

There were fire evacuation procedures displayed in a prominent area within the service.

Firefighting equipment was present in the service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) There were staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the service.

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.

(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) There was a record of fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place in June 2026 and staff advised that monthly fire drills were completed.

(b) There was a record available demonstrating that the smoke alarm system was last serviced in December 2025 and the firefighting equipment was last serviced on the same date.

(4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed in a conspicuous position on the premises.

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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

An in-date certificate was in place to demonstrate that the service was insured to provide full day care for the number of children the service is registered to accommodate.