

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD006
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Name of Service:	Baile Beag First Steps Creche
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Address of Service:	Ballybeg Community Centre, St. Saviour's Parish Centre Grounds, Ballybeg, Waterford City, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 N265
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Name of Registered Provider:	Doireann Nix
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	27/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	50
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Buildings Cork Road, Waterford City
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw L. McGarry
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Baile Beag First Steps Creche is a community-based service and is registered to provide a full-day care service operating from 08:15 to 17:15, for children aged from 0 to 6 years of age. The service is based in a single-storey, purpose-built premises on the ground of St. Saviours Parish Centre. There are five care rooms, a kitchen, a sanitary area, a staff room, and an office. The outdoor play area is at the rear of the service

Staffing

The service employs a total of 37 staff, including 8 auxiliary staff members (the manager, the administration team, maintenance staff, and a chef). All staff working directly with the children held a minimum of level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 - Staff Ratios;

Regulation 19 – Health, Welfare and Development of Child;

Regulation 32 – Complaints.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Additional Information

This inspection was triggered by information received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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,*
- (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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*
- (c) these Regulations.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The registered person was on site on the day of the inspection and there was a person to deputise if required. Information outlining the line management structure, including the board of management, was displayed in the reception area. The staff names, positions and photographs were displayed in the reception area and at the entrance to each of their care rooms.

(2) (4)

Following a review of previous inspection details, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge, it was determined there were no new staff employed since the last inspection on the 14 May 2026. Therefore, no files required reviewing.

(7)

Staff who spoke to the inspector said they had regular staff meetings where all aspects of the governance of the service were discussed. The service employs a supervisor who is not assigned a care room, but whose role is to be available to offer support to staff in relation to activities and curriculum. They oversaw the daily care offered to the children and aimed to ensure the staff's practice is of a high standard. Each care room had a dedicated room leader who was responsible for the day-to-day supervision of their staff team. The supervisor and room leaders met monthly to discuss aspects of their management of the children in their rooms. Minutes of these meeting were reviewed by the inspectors. Standing items that were on the agenda and documented were, for example, checking in with staff and the development of the curriculum in the specific rooms. These records also included checking in with children, which included observations on children's particular needs in the service and how these needs could be met. The supervisor and room leaders were also given an opportunity at these meetings to formally raise any other concerns they had, for example, the requirement of any additional equipment.

In addition to the supervision and support for staff from the room leads, management was available to offer support in the care room. Staff in the Wobbler rooms described how they had requested support as a new child was transitioning from home. The manager spent time in this room allowing the staff to spend time with the child on a one to one basis. Management described how they plan to spend more time in the care rooms in the coming year.

Staff described the system in place to support their own development in the service with regular one to one meeting with the management team and the opportunities for continual professional development with ongoing training both mandatory and otherwise.

Minutes of these meeting were reviewed by the inspectors. The documents supported the staff's description of the ongoing support they received in the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

All staff participated in intensive safeguarding training in August 2026. During this training the fundamental principles of safeguarding and appropriate practice were discussed and reinforced. Staff were reminded of best practice and their responsibilities as professionals and their role as mandated persons. The behaviour management policy, and Child safeguarding policy were reviewed thoroughly.

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)(2)

The was an adequate number of staff working with children throughout the day. On the inspector's arrival at 10:45 there were 55 children the care of 22 staff and at 14:45 there were 50 children in the care of 21 staff. There were two staff in the service who were not assigned care rooms but were available to cover breaks and to assist across the rooms if required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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-

(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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) (3)

The inspectors observed the following:

The service had just opened as they had been closed for three weeks for their summer holidays. Many of the children were settling in on the day of inspection. The inspectors noted the process was child centred and also focused on the needs of new parents who were dropping their children to the service for the first time. For example, staff in the baby room who cared for babies from 4 months to 1 year of age were observed settling in babies on the day of inspection. Staff who spoke to the inspectors described a new system which was developed with the manager's approval where parents dropped their children for a period of one hour. The staff had an agreed schedule with parents where two children would attend for an hour before the next two children. A block of 30 minutes was allowed between the groups of children for a comprehensive chat with parents to reassure them and get to know their baby's needs. Staff who spoke to the inspector said this new system was to allow time for parents and babies to get used to the service in a more supportive and child centred way.

The settling in policy in practice was also observed in the wobbler room. One child who was transitioning from the baby room was observed to settle with their key worker. This staff member had previously looked after the child in the baby room. The child was attached to this staff member and was observed to settle well with the staff member in the room. Staff who spoke to the inspectors described the key worker system in place in the service. This system allocates each child attending to a named staff member. This staff member is then responsible for ensuring good communication between the service and the child's parents. Staff allocate children to key workers after they have become familiar with the child. Staff then evaluate which staff member will be more suitable to that particular child.

Children's independence and decision making was fostered. The layout of the rooms facilitated children's abilities to choose their activities and whether to play independently or in groups. Staff described how during a planning

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

day they had worked together to review the opportunities available for each child keeping in mind their needs and their interests. They described how they based their plans on the Aistear guide.

The accessibility of the toys and equipment allowed children the autonomy to meet their own needs with the support of the staff in the rooms. Staff were noted to place themselves around the care rooms and interact with the children's play while observing the other children nearby. Staff invited children to join in their activity if they saw that they had finished what they were doing. A staff member noted a child lying on the couch away from the other children, they checked in with them and sat on the couch and chatted until they were assured that the child was just taking a break from their play and they were not upset. The staff checked in again with that child after a few minutes. Staff were observant to children's interests. A staff noted a child kept checking the weather by going to the door and putting his hand out. A staff member noted this and they chatted about going outside once the rain had stopped.

Many of the staff team had worked in the service for more than three years and were familiar with other family members who had also attended the service. Staff were aware of the policies of the service regarding children who were ill and the parent of a child who was unwell was contacted promptly. The child was held and comforted until the parent arrived.

Children's choice was respected; at dinner time the staff served the food but asked the children if they wanted lasagne, plain pasta and/or garlic bread. They encouraged children to try all the options and went to the kitchen to get more portions when they had run out. Younger children were given bibs to protect their clothes. Staff sat and chatted with the children during dinner time making it a sociable time for the children. Children who could feed themselves were encouraged to do so and children who needed assistance were helped.

Children were given notice before it was time to tidy up, this gave them the chance to wind down their games and finish what they were doing which created a calm atmosphere during transition times. A staff suggested to one child who had not finished the house they were building to put it on the high shelf so it would be safe and return to after dinner. Children demonstrated that they were familiar with the running of the day and began washing their hands once they had tidied up to prepare to eat their dinner. After dinner children replaced their cups and delph on the trolley and washed their faces and hands.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The activities offered met the children's needs and also presented challenges which the staff supported and encouraged. In the garden staff encouraged children to try use the slide and supported them gently and congratulated them when they achieved it themselves.

Partnership with parents was evident in the service. Staff chatted with parents at collection time and gave a quick synopsis of what had happened during the day. They were noted to include the children in the conversation also. The service uses a mobile phone app to communicate with parents. The inspector observed parents were welcomed into the rooms when collecting and dropping their children.

(3)

The inspectors observed the staff in all the rooms observed on the day of inspection were kind and considerate to the children. Staff were aware of the services policy on behaviour management. The following was noted:

- Staff used soft gentle tones when speaking to the children. They sat or crouched at the children's level when speaking to them and asked open ended questions leaving children time to answer. A staff member was observed to sit on the couch with a child and chatting and saying I haven't seen you in ages what did you get up to on your holidays? Staff demonstrated a warm and caring relationship with the children. When a staff member entered the room to cover breaks three children were noted to give them hugs and say hi.
- Disagreements were managed in a positive way with the staff giving the children an opportunity to each explain what happened and then give advice and options as to how it could be fixed. The children appeared happy with one of the options and proceeded to return to their play.
- Positive communication was evident between the staff team during the activities and when a staff returned from their lunch, they were given a brief handover of what had happened and what the plan was going forward. Once the children were busy and there was an additional staff member in the room the room leader said they would take the time to display the children's artwork on the walls.
- Through discussion with staff and management it was confirmed that the team underwent training following their summer break which included a refresher on appropriate and prohibited care practices.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Through discussion with management and a review of the policy, which had previously been submitted to the inspectorate, the registered provider had ensured the complaints policy included the relevant information required in this regulation.