

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021SO001
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Name of Service:	Claire Barden Award Winning Childcare
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Address of Service:	Abhainn Mor, Ballincarrow, Collooney, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 A310
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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:	02/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	45	PM	27
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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:	L Costello, N Toner
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

This full day care service is located in the town of Collooney, Co Sligo and provides sessional, part time and fulltime care from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. The service is registered to cater for children aged between one and six years of age and is also registered to provide school age care. The service operates from a detached two-story building consisting of four care rooms. The two care rooms on the ground floor cater for the younger children and the first-floor care rooms cater for preschool and school aged children. A kitchen, sleep room, sanitary facilities and an office are located on the ground floor. To the rear and side of property is a large enclosed outdoor area with a roofed outdoor playroom.

Staffing

The service employs 10 staff members all of which work directly with the preschool children. The registered provider is on the premises daily and works directly with the children.

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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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 22, 23, 27, 29 and 32. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation (number and name of regulation) ...As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms name rooms...

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*
- (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-

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- (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.*

(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)

There was a person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(b)

The person in charge remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear governance structure in place with room leaders, deputy manager and person in charge. On discussion with staff, they appeared aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. A total of two files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for all 10 staff members were requested for review.

(a)(b)

Four written and verified references from a past employer were available in respect of the two adults.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for ten staff.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

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(d)

International police vetting was not required for the two adults as they had not lived outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.

(3)

The registered provider demonstrated that vetting procedures had been completed prior to an adult having access to preschool children with evidence of start dates for all newly employed staff.

(4)

The two newly appointed adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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 an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were eight adults working directly with 45 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection and seven adults working directly with 27 children in the afternoon.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service

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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

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff members were observed to be respectful, gentle, and kind in their interactions towards the children in their care.
- During mealtimes the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with children promoting a relaxed atmosphere. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves.
- The younger child were held and cuddled as needed throughout the day. There was evidence of familiarity between the staff and children as conversations were had about family life, holidays planned and new arrivals to families.
- Pictures of families displayed on the walls in the care rooms ensured children's connection to home was maintained. This service had made effort to get to know the child and care rooms displayed 'all about me' art work with likes and dislikes noted.

Basic Needs:

- Nappy changing was observed to be an opportunity for positive engagement and interaction with the children which was observed on the day. Staff members used this time for one to one engagement with cuddle and laughter while respecting the dignity of the child. The older children who were toileting independently were prompted to do so and supervised from a distance.

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- Morning and afternoon snacks were provided by the parents and brought into the service in lunch boxes and stored in the fridge. Snacks included crackers, fruit, cheese, variety of sandwiches and yoghurts. The main meal of the day was provided by the service.
- The younger children's basic needs were responded to in a prompt manner, noses wiped as required. Hands and faces cleaned after mealtimes and clothes changed if they were soiled, ensuring dignity was promoted.

Physical Materials:

- All of the care rooms were laid out to facilitate sensory experiences for the child through arts and crafts and sensory tables including water and rice. Fine motor development was supported using jigsaws, pins and threading puzzles. Opportunities for imaginary and role play were provided in the home corner and dress up area as well as construction area and farm animal areas.
- The younger 'Countess Markievicz room' was resourced with equipment suitable to the age and stage of development of the young children in these rooms, including home corners, construction areas, animals, and musical instruments and soft toys. All equipment was stored on open shelving at children's heights so that choice can be facilitated.
- The outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children. The outdoor area provided several different outdoor areas with various resources including tunnels, tyres slides, swings ride on toys and bikes and trikes, mud kitchens and playhouses.
- Children were observed moving throughout the different interest areas using gross motor skills on the various wooden structures in the main outdoor area. This included a large wooden bus structure for children's imagination, two large climbing frames, a wooden bridge where children used balance and coordination and a large tree house.
- To the bottom of the outdoor area was a chicken coop where children could interact with two chickens which were enclosed in a pen covered with chicken wire and a wooden fence.
- There were six separate outdoor areas, all separated by wooden fencing. One area has a tarmacadam service to cater for wheeled vehicles such as ride on tractors, three wheeled bikes and a go kart. The external perimeter of the outdoor area is protected by a tall metal fence. All other areas have artificial grass ensuring a soft surface for safer rough play.
- There is a dedicated area for the younger children to the side of the service which contains several toy houses and smaller slides. On the day of inspection, the staff interacted well with the children playing with

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a large playground parachute where the children used teamwork and coordination to keep the parachute a float while they played games.

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

Morning and afternoon snacks were brought in from home and contained healthy nutritious snacks including yoghurts, fresh fruit, a variety of sandwiches, cheese and crackers.

The main meal of the day was provided by an external catering company.

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, the registered provider did not ensure the main meal provided, was adequate, suitable nutritious and varied food and drink was available to each preschool child. The inspectors observed the following practices:

- In the 'Countess Markievicz room' at approximately 13:19, one child had finished his dinner and repeatedly requested '*dinner...dinner*'. Staff members responded, 'You have finished'. The child continued to request '*dinner.... dinner*' and picked up food from the floor to eat. This was despite a staff member entering the room asking if any one required extra portion.
- In the 'Seamus Heaney room' children did not appear to have adequate time for the main meal. Dinner was served at 13.25. and cleaned up by 13:31. Children requested on three occasions that they would like an additional portion. No extra portions were offered. The main meal was observed to be rushed with no extra portions offered to children on request.
- No drinking water was provided at dinner time in the 'Seamus Heaney room'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

- A poster placed in both Seamus Heany and Countess Markievicz Room to serve as a reminder to staff to ensure extra portions are provided and requests from children are acknowledged and responded to. Staff have been retrained to recognise that one full dinner may not be satisfactory to every child.

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- One staff member completed training and has certificate achieved in ‘facilitating snack and mealtimes’, in addition to inhouse training to encourage a slower paced mealtime, creating a social “family-style” dining as modelled by senior staff.
- Staff members have been instructed to hand out drinking water to the children at dinner time.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Poster submitted to the inspectorate.
- New menu plan submitted to the inspectorate.
- Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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 service was secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service.
- Windows were risk assessed with appropriate restrictors in place.
- Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the preschool children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided for effective hand hygiene.
- Children were observed to wash their hands prior to mealtimes, after using the bathroom and after messy play.
- The service was observed to be clean and tidy throughout with tables and floors cleaned regularly on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed to sleep on the day of inspection.
- A sleep supervision record was in place which demonstrated ten-minute sleep checks.

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- Three standard cots were provided for sleep if required. Each cot was provided with individual bed linen and a waterproof mattress protector.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation plans were displayed throughout the service.
- Emergency evacuation routes were kept clear of hazards on the day of inspection.

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

Supervision was observed to be adequate indoors and outdoors on the day of inspection. Staff members were observed to communicate well with each other when moving in and out of rooms ensuring all children were accounted for. Staff members were observed to position themselves to ensure children were in view at all times. In the outdoor play area, staff members ensured they were positioned to supervise the children from their room in the various sections of the outdoor space.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) On a visual check of the premises the building appeared to be of a sound and stable structure with no visible defects.
- (b) The building was safe and secure on the day of inspection. The main entry point was monitored by a bell entry system. The perimeter was secured by high level block fencing and wooden locked gates.
- (c) The service was observed to be adequately lit. Numerous large windows provided all care rooms with adequate lighting which was supplemented by artificial lighting. The service was heated on the day of the

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inspection with room temperatures recorded at 21.0°C. Hot water temperatures were recorded at 41°C in hand wash basins. Openable windows provided natural ventilation, while mechanical ventilation was provided in the bathroom areas.

- (d) The service was observed to be clean and well maintained with all resources and materials in good condition.
- (e) Sanitary facilities were sufficient to meet the numbers of the children attending the service.

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)

The registered provider submitted their complaint policy to the inspectorate which outlined the procedures to be followed if somebody wished to make a complaint to the service.

(b)

The complaints policy outlines the steps the service take to manage any complaints received.

(c)

The complaints policy states how the complainant will be kept informed.

(2)(a)(b)

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The registered provider stated that they have received no direct complaints to the service. The registered provider on discussion with the inspectors confirmed the process they would take if they received a complaint to the service in line with the service policy.

(3)(a)(b)

The registered provider confirmed that no complaints had been received directly to the service. The registered provider demonstrated the process followed when a complaint was received by a third party and the response to same.