

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022LH002
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Name of Service:	Dun Dealgan Childcare
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Address of Service:	13 Demesne Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 E516
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Name of Registered Provider:	Irenaeus McCaffrey
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	19
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & S. Skinnader
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

Dun Dealgan Childcare is a privately operated service that provides full day, part-time and sessional care and education to children aged 2-6 years. The service is registered to operate from 8.30am – 6pm Monday - Friday and caters for a maximum of 39 pre-school children.

The service is located in a purposely renovated building in a residential area of Dundalk, Co. Louth. The premises consists of 3 playrooms, each with adjoining sanitary accommodation. A kitchenette, small office area and staff toilet are located off the hallway. An enclosed outdoor area is available to the front and side of the building.

Staffing

There were 17 employed staff in the service which included the following:

- The registered provider who works directly with the preschool children.
- 12 childcare staff who work directly with the preschool children and this includes the deputy person in charge.
- 1 staff member who works with children attending the school aged service.
- 3 ancillary staff members who carry out catering, administrative and cleaning duties.

One student also attends the service on a regular basis.

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

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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.

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.

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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*
- (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.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge, and two named persons to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The deputy person was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.00am. The person in charge and the registered provider returned to the premises at approximately 11.00am following an outing with the preschool children and were present for the remainder of the inspection.
- (c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, a notice on the notice board in the hallway and in discussion with the staff team.

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(2) Following a discussion with the registered provider and deputy person in charge and a review of the staff rosters, 5 new members of staff have been employed since the last inspection on 20/05/2025. One student and a contracted music teacher now also attend the service.

The staff files for the registered provider and 11 existing members of staff were reviewed on previous inspections and were found to be compliant.

The staff files for 5 new members of staff, 1 student and the contracted music teacher were presented for inspection and reviewed:

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for each of the new members of staff, student and contracted teacher.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for the 5 new members of staff, student and contracted teacher.

Garda vetting disclosures were also reviewed for the registered provider and 11 existing staff members who were present in the service. The documents reviewed demonstrated that the registered provider adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 5 newly employed staff, student and contracted teacher demonstrated that 1 adult had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. International police vetting was presented for inspection and met regulatory compliance.

(4) Sufficient documentary evidence was available to confirm that 2 out of 3 new staff members employed to work directly with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Documentary evidence previously reviewed for the registered provider and 9 staff members employed to work directly with children met regulatory compliance.

Evidence of a childcare qualification for ancillary staff, one school-aged staff member, one student, and the contracted teacher is not required as they are not employed to work directly with the preschool children.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Sufficient documentary evidence was not available to confirm that one new member of staff who was observed working directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Actions.

The staff member is still employed by the service but is not deemed as in ratios until evidence of the minimum required childcare qualification certificate is available. The staff member is actively working on it at the moment. Going forward the registered provider will ensure that appropriate proof of the minimum required childcare qualifications are available.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. The Inspectorate has not received evidence of the minimum required childcare qualification to date, however, accepts the assurances given by the registered provider that this staff member does not work directly with the preschool children. Based on the information submitted, the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 has been addressed and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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) During the period of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

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(2) The following adult: child ratios were observed in the three care rooms when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.00am:

The Cherry Blossom Room: There were 8 preschool children (aged 2-3 years) who were playing in the outdoor area with 2 qualified childcare staff members. One additional staff member was present in this care room with one child who was sleeping.

The Preschool children attending the Aqua and Discovery Rooms were off-site on a school outing at this time.

When they returned to the service at approximately 11.00am the following adult: child ratios were observed:

The Aqua Room: There were 11 preschool children (aged 3-5 years) attending this room with 4 qualified childcare staff.

One child attending the school aged service was also present.

The Discovery Room: There were 9 preschool children (aged 3-4 years) attending the 1st morning ECCE session from 08.30-11.30 am with 3 qualified childcare staff.

A second ECCE session commenced at 11.40am-2.40pm and there were 4 preschool children aged 3-4 years present with 1 qualified staff member and 1 additional staff member.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children's attendance records, this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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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.

Compliance Information

There were 3 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection: namely The Discovery Room, The Cherry Blossom Room and The Aqua Room.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic needs:

- Throughout the service the children were observed to move freely in the care rooms. All children had a change of environment to the outdoor area and the children attending the Aqua and Discovery Rooms were observed to go 'off site' for a school outing. All children were dressed appropriately for going outside.
- Child led sleep needs were facilitated in the service. One child attending the Cherry Blossom room was observed asleep on a day bed when the inspectors arrived to the premises, while the remaining children went outside to play. Rest areas, which included a variety of soft mats, and cushions, were available in the care rooms, providing areas for children to take some time out to rest during their day.
- Individual care plans for children who required additional supports, were in place, and the staff in the relevant care rooms were familiar with them.
- Children who were toilet trained were encouraged to do so independently. The toilets are located off the care rooms, and the staff were observed to provide discrete supervision and support where needed.
- Nappy changing was observed to be carried out regularly. Positive and social interactions were observed during this time.
- Staff promoted positive behaviour and interactions to ensure minor disagreements did not escalate. Children were encouraged to play nicely with their friends, comments from staff included "*hands down so we don't get sand in someone's eyes*", "*it's nice to ask*" and "*when is finished you can have a turn, I like to see this waiting!*".

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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

Healthy eating was promoted within the service. A copy of a 3-week rolling menu was available, which detailed a wide variety of meals served to the children, which were prepared and cooked on site by the cook. Breakfast cereal is served to children who require breakfast. All morning and afternoon snacks are provided by the parents and guardians from home. Pasta and bolognese sauce was provided on the day of the inspection, which all children were observed to enjoy. Extra portions were provided for the children who requested. A child who didn't want the dinner was given plain pasta with butter and salt like "home" but as it was not the same, was subsequently offered plain pasta.

The staff were observed to sit with the children and to engage in social conversations. The service provides all snacks and meals to the children in attendance, unless otherwise agreed with the child's parents.

The children's drink bottles/ cups were available and accessible in the care rooms throughout the day.

Where children have specific dietary requirements and or allergies, the staff explained how they cater for and provide for any request from parents regarding allergies or dietary requirements.

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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external and internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the early years' service.
- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

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- The outdoor play areas located to the rear and side of the premises were gated and secured with fencing to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, hand soap and paper towels were available at each wash hand basin.
- Throughout the service, when questioned the staff were familiar with the cleaning procedures for mouthed toys and the general toys in the care room in accordance with best practice guidelines.
- Tabletops were observed to be cleaned down before and after lunch/ snack times.
- Staff report that any perishable food items brought in for lunches, come in in plastic bags and are removed and placed in the fridge.
- Hands were all washed after the children were outside and before lunch.

Safe Sleep:

- Physical safe sleep observations were carried out at the required 10-minute intervals by the staff member who was present in the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service based on the following observations made during the inspection:

General Safety:

- In the Cherry Blossom Room, the bottle of cleaning spray was left on a low-level shelf beside the children's drink cups and bottles. It was then moved to the windowsill. Both areas were accessible to the preschool children and this is a health and safety risk.
- In the Cherry Blossom Room, a small electric air conditioning unit was unsecured on a low-level shelf and accessible to the children. This was a health and safety hazard as it was a potential impact hazard.

Infection Control:

The staff did not always take appropriate steps to prevent the spread of infection in the service. For example;

- In the Discovery Room one staff carrying out a nappy change was observed to keep their used gloves on and proceeded to wash the child's hands under the water after the procedure, dry the child's hands with a piece of paper towel, wipe down the nappy change mat with a spray and wipe the bin lids with the used gloves still in place. This is a cross-contamination risk.
- In the Discovery Room, cold water was observed being used to wash a child's hands after nappy changing. This is at variance with infection control best practice guidelines that recommends using warm water.

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5. The pedal function on the metal bin for disposal of nappies in the Discovery Room sanitary area was broken. The staff were observed to use their hands to open the lid to dispose of the soiled nappies which is cross infection risk. This is a recurring non-compliance from the last inspection that was carried out on 20/05/25. The registered provider submitted a corrective and preventative action in response to the non-compliance stating "The nappy bins were removed and replaced with new bins that are lined with bags. These are foot operated and meet the standards required for cross infection. Monthly risk assessments are in place and the bins will be checked to ensure they meet compliance". However these actions did not prevent the non-compliance reoccurring.

Safe Sleep:

6. The sleep room temperature was not documented as part of the 10-minute physical sleep observation in the Cherry Blossom Room.
7. In the Cherry Blossom Room, the wall mounted thermometer was not recording an accurate room temperature. The inspectors found a room temperature of 20.7 - 21.8°C when checked with their thermopens. The wall thermometer was reading 13°C at this time. This went unnoticed by the staff present in the care room who was carrying out safe sleep observations on a sleeping child. In addition, this was not identified or recorded on the electronic risk assessment that was completed on the day of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

General Safety

1. The cleaning spray bottle has now been placed on a high shelf and will not be placed on a low shelf going forward.

2. The electric fan was removed to a high secure shelf that is not in reach of the children. Staff have also been spoken to in the Cherry Blossom room.

These requirements have been recorded on the daily Health & Safety actions that the staff must complete each day. This will prevent this from happening again going forward.

Infection Control

3&4. Cross contamination was brought up at a staff meeting at the end of June. The Infection Control Policy was discussed at the staff meeting and addressed with all staff. The use of cold water to wash hands was also brought up at the staff meeting and discussed the consequences of this. All staff know that warm water must be used to

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wash a child's hands in order to prevent germs. The registered provider will continue to re visit the infection control policy and make sure that all staff are fully aware of it and ensure that the appropriate steps are carried out at all times.

5. The metal nappy bin has now been replaced in the changing area and staff are aware that they must use the pedal at all times to open the bin. This was emphasised at the staff meeting held at the end of June. The use of metal bins was discussed at the staff meeting and all staff know that they must use the pedals at all times. The pedal bins have been added to the check list for the rooms and will be signed off by the staff. A member of staff has been assigned to carry out room checks daily.

Safe Sleep

6. The importance of recording the sleep room temperature as part of each 10-minute physical sleep observation has been reviewed with all staff. Staff have been reminded that the temperature must be checked and documented during the required sleep observations, in accordance with the safe sleep procedures. The sleep monitoring record has been reviewed, and staff are now ensuring that both the physical observation and room temperature are recorded at the required intervals. To prevent a recurrence, the sleep monitoring procedure has been reinforced with all relevant staff. The sleep observation record has been reviewed to ensure there is a clearly identifiable section for recording the room temperature alongside each 10-minute physical sleep check. The Manager will carry out regular audits of the sleep monitoring records to ensure that observations and temperatures are being consistently and accurately documented. Any omissions identified will be addressed immediately with the staff member concerned and followed up by management.

Staff will also receive ongoing reminders during team meetings and supervision regarding the requirement to accurately record all elements of the 10-minute sleep observations. In future, the sleep temperature will be recorded at each 10-minute interval.

7. A new Wall Mounted Thermometer was replaced and checked to make sure it was working properly. In the Risk assessment this will be checked to make sure it is in working order. Manager will carry out regular audits of the sleep monitoring records to ensure that observations and temperatures are being consistently and accurately documented.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic & documentary evidence

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Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance, together with documentary and photographic evidence. Additional information was requested and submitted by the registered provider via email. Based on the information submitted, the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed. Implementation of these corrective and preventative actions will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (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

(c) & (d) During the inspection the care rooms were adequately ventilated. The windows were open to allow fresh air to circulate. On visual inspection there was no evidence of mould or damp and the sanitary areas in the Aqua and Cherry Blossom rooms had been painted since the previous inspection. Care rooms and sanitary areas were ventilated through means of openable windows and were maintained between the required temperatures of 18°C - 22°C. New electronic air freshers had also been installed in the sanitary accommodation off the Aqua Room.

(e) There were adequate and suitable sanitary facilities, freely accessible to the children attending the 3 care rooms during the inspection.