

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL003			
Name of Service:	ABC Childcare Centre			
Address of Service:	Finnvalley Enterprise Park, Lifford, Co. Donegal			
Eircode:	F93 XDW3			
Name of Registered Provider:	Linda Byrne			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	19/03/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	22
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92			
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner			
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).				
Conditions if applicable	N/A			

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Description of service

This purpose-built, community-based registered preschool service is in a residential area of Lifford, Co. Donegal. The service caters for children aged between 0 and 6 years and operates Monday to Friday from 9:30am to 5:15pm. It offers sessional, part-time and full day care. The service operates from a dedicated building comprising four childcare playrooms. There are three rooms downstairs and one room upstairs. There is a fully equipped kitchen, staff room and appropriate sanitary facilities. Preschool children have access to outdoor play areas located to the back and side of the premises, providing opportunities for daily outdoor play and physical activity.

Staffing

The registered provider is not present on the premises daily and has appointed a person in charge to oversee the day-to-day running of the service. A named person in charge and a named designated deputy was in place on the day of inspection. There are 18 adults employed in the service on the day of inspection. Sixteen adults were present, including the manager, an administrator, and a cook. This also included 3 Access and Inclusion Model (A.I.M). Fourteen adults were working 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/ safety/and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26 and 28.

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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 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 has a designated person in charge and a named person who can deputise as required.

(b)

On the day of inspection, the person in charge was on site for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was 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)

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On the day of the inspection, the person in charge confirmed that there were 18 staff members who worked in the service. Recruitment files in respect of the 18 staff members were reviewed, and the following information was available:

- (a)
16 references from past employers, in particular the most recent past employer was on file for the 12 staff members.
- (b)
20 references from other sources, in the absence of a past employers, was on file for 14 staff members.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures was on file for all 18 staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)
International police vetting was not required for any staff members, as they had not resided outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (4)
Documentary evidence on file to demonstrate that 15 staff members had obtained a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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,*

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Compliance Information

- (1)
On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2)
The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed in the service on this day:
- (8) (a)
A review of the staff ratio demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that two adults were always present on the premises.

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
 - (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)
- Basic Needs:**
- Staff in Preschool Room 1 described how the service provides balanced meals and snacks each day. This was supported by a review of the menu plan, discussions with the cook and staff members, and observations of morning snack in Preschool Room 1. The morning snack consisted of fresh fruit, including apples and bananas, along with crackers.
- The main meal was observed in the baby room, where four children were served potatoes, carrots and chicken with gravy. Two staff members supported the children, who sat together at a table with appropriately sized chairs. Dinner arrived at 11:45am. All children had their drink bottles on the table, and staff encouraged them to take their time and enjoy their meal. Children were supported to feed themselves, with assistance provided where

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required. Mealtime was observed to be a calm and enjoyable experience, with children appearing relaxed and engaged with their food and with each other. Snack times were also observed in other rooms of the service. These routines were similarly positive, with children enjoying healthy snacks, lunch and dinner, followed by an afternoon snack. Water stations were available in all rooms, ensuring that children always had access to drinking water.

Sleep was observed in the baby room from 12:00pm. Two children aged nine months to eighteen months of age slept in cots, and one child aged one year and eleven months of age slept on a floor bed. The designated sleep room contained five cots, was maintained and was darkened to support restful sleep. White noise played softly in the background to create a calming environment. Sleep and rest routines in the wobbler room were based on the individual needs of the young children. Children were observed being put down to sleep as required, in consultation with their parents as discussed with staff.

Sleep was later observed in the wobbler toddler room, where stackable floor beds were placed throughout the room. The room was darkened, and all children were offered the opportunity to sleep or rest according to their needs. In the toddler room, a structured rest period took place after lunchtime, during which time, all children were offered the opportunity to sleep or rest.

Young children had their nappies attended to in a timely manner. Staff used this routine as an opportunity for one-to-one interaction, engaging positively with children through conversation and singing.

Older children were encouraged to use the bathroom independently, with staff remaining within earshot to prompt or assist as required. Several children in the toddler/ wobbler room were in the process of toilet training and were supported and encouraged by staff throughout the routine.

Supporting Relationships:

There was strong evidence of respect and compassion throughout the service. Staff members were observed to be respectful, gentle and kind in their interactions with the children. During mealtimes, staff sat at the tables and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed and positive atmosphere. Younger children were held and comforted, contributing to a warm and welcoming environment. The service supported children's relationships by keeping parents and guardians fully informed of daily activities using communication books, which provided updates on eating, sleeping and nappy-changing routines. Photographs of the children's families displayed on the walls of the care rooms further supported children's sense of security and connection to home.

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Physical and material Environment:

The indoor areas were arranged to facilitate a wide range of sensory and creative experiences, including arts and crafts activities and play-dough trays. Fine-motor development was supported using jigsaws, shape sorters, crayons and drawing materials, while gross-motor development was encouraged through ride-on toys, climbing equipment and outdoor ball play. Preschool Rooms 1 and 2 contained a variety of play-based materials that promoted stimulation, exploration and imagination. These resources were stored on open, accessible shelving, supporting children's independence, choice and spontaneous play. Interest areas were spacious, uncluttered and well-resourced, offering an adequate range of toys and materials. Defined areas included a role-play kitchen with child-sized wooden appliances and utensils, dress-up areas with a variety of costumes, a reading area with a selection of books to support language development, and a construction area with small cars and trucks. There was a strong emphasis on art and design, with children's creations displayed throughout the service, and children were encouraged to use paints and express their creativity. Positive teamwork was observed in Preschool Room 2 when staff informed the children it was time to move outdoors; the children worked together to tidy the room and took pride in their efforts before going outside. Their artwork was hung up to dry while they engaged in outdoor play.

Programme of Activities:

Each child had an individual activity book which documented outings and activities as well as samples of the children's art and craft work and records of the themes explored, including the current theme of spring. Ongoing observations and assessments were recorded and contributed to building a well-rounded picture of each child's learning and development. These observations were individual to each child and outlined completed tasks and future learning goals. Children's language development was supported through one-to-one and group songs, storytelling and regular circle time, which was observed in all rooms on the day of inspection, with all children encouraged to participate.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that there was suitable and adequate furniture and play materials and resources available for the preschool children:

Preschool Rooms 1 and 2

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Preschool Rooms 1 and 2 cater for children aged 3 to 6 years. Both rooms were observed to be visually stimulating, with children's artwork and educational posters displayed throughout, contributing to a colourful and engaging learning environment.

The layout included clearly defined interest areas that supported imaginative play, role play, and creative development. The home-corner areas were appropriately equipped with child-sized kitchen units, dolls, baby-care equipment, and cots. A designated construction area provided a range of building materials, including blocks, cars, trucks, and road tracks. Low-level, accessible shelving allowed children to independently select from a variety of fine-motor resources such as magnets, suction toys, tweezers, and counting materials. Sensory exploration was facilitated through the provision of water and sand play tables. Both rooms contained enough age- and height-appropriate tables and chairs to support tabletop activities and mealtimes. A designated rest area, furnished with a child-sized sofa and soft furnishings, offered a comfortable and quiet space for relaxation or reading.

Wobbler Toddler Room:

This room supports children aged two to three years and was observed to be spacious and well-organised. Four tables were arranged with a variety of tabletop activities, including arts and crafts, painting, playdough, and sensory materials. One table was set up as a nature table, containing items such as straw, water, sand, and soil. Children were seen engaging with these materials, which linked to the room's current theme of nature and spring. The room has direct access to the outdoor play area, which children used frequently throughout the day due to favourable weather conditions. Indoors, the room contained equipment and materials similar to those available in the other preschool rooms, with a strong emphasis on art and design. Children's artwork was displayed prominently, contributing to a bright and stimulating learning environment. Educational posters featuring the alphabet, days of the week, and months of the year were displayed in vibrant colours to encourage children's interest and early literacy skills.

A designated home-corner area included a child-sized kitchen and related role-play materials. Another area contained a shelving unit with baskets of open-ended resources such as plastic bricks, magnetic shapes, farm animals, and vehicles. A library area with cushions and a small sofa provided a comfortable space for story time and songs. A selection of puzzles and threading activities was also available to support children's fine-motor development.

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The Baby Room:

The baby room is smaller in size but provides an intimate and nurturing environment appropriate for the needs of the young children using it. Directly adjacent to the baby room is the designated sleep room, as well as access to a fully equipped baby-changing room. The sleep room contained five cots, well-spaced apart, in line with regulatory requirements.

The baby room itself was clean, bright, and colourful, with a calm atmosphere. Age-appropriate toys were available, all of which were clean, soft, and in good condition. Three distinct areas were set up to allow children to rest, relax, and engage in play. Sensory toys offering a variety of textures and colours were also provided to support exploration and development. A small library area with age-appropriate books and soft seating was available, offering a comfortable space for children to relax. The overall atmosphere in the room was calm and soothing. Children appeared relaxed, happy, and engaged both with one another and with the staff member present.

Outdoor Area:

The outdoor area was divided into two separate sections: a smaller space for the younger children and a larger area for the older children. The smaller outdoor area had a soft surface and a variety of equipment such as push bikes, scooters and tyres, which supported the development of mobility skills and balance. The larger outdoor area was divided into several zones, including a substantial wooden play structure designed specifically for the space. This structure featured tunnels for sliding down, grassy areas for exploration, steps and a slide leading to a soft sand and grass surface. Additional sections included another slide and swing set, further tunnels and a range of tyres to promote gross motor skills, balance and coordination. A wide selection of materials was available in this area, including three-wheeled trikes, scooters, push bikes, tractors with trailers, and outdoor toys such as trucks and cars. Children spent a significant amount of time outdoors on the day of inspection due to favourable weather conditions and appeared to enjoy their time in each of the outdoor spaces.

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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 entrance to the premises including the play area was secured to prevent preschool children from exiting the service.
- All internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- Cleaning products were securely stored to be inaccessible to the preschool children
- The kitchen which contained cooking facilities and hazardous items was not accessible to the children.
- Gates leading to unsecured, hazardous areas were secured.

Infection Control:

- In the sleep rooms all five cot mattresses had the waterproof protection coverings.
- Children demonstrated good hand hygiene practices after using the toilet.
- Staff cleaned tables before and during the meals in the service.

Safe Sleep:

- The five cots were equipped with the appropriate safety mattresses and waterproof covers.
- Cellular blankets were provided for the younger preschool children.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation plans were displayed throughout the service.
- Staff described to the inspector that emergency fire evacuation drills are scheduled monthly and all children are familiar with the evacuation drills. This was further evidence by a review of the documented fire evacuation drills in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. It was observed that children sleeping on floor beds were not supervised in accordance with regulatory requirements. The sleep environment requires continuous in-room supervision; however, at the time of inspection, no staff member was present in the sleep room while children were sleeping. Sleep was observed by the inspector between the times of 12pm to 12.30pm.

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- It was identified that the supervising staff member did not carry out or record physical sleep checks every 10 minutes, as required. Sleep observations must be completed, documented, and recorded in accordance with the service's sleep policy. Sleep was observed by the inspector between the times of 12pm to 12.30pm.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Safe Sleep:

- Following the inspection, we reviewed our sleep supervision procedures to ensure full compliance with Regulation 23 Safe Sleep requirements. Immediate action was taken to ensure that children sleeping on floor beds who are under the age of 2 are always supervised by a staff member physically present in the sleep room rather than 10-minute checks that we thought were in line with requirements. All staff have been made aware of proper requirements to ensure safe sleep.
- Following the inspection, we reviewed sleep monitoring practices in relation to Regulation 23 and the service's Safe Sleep Policy. Visual sleep checks were being conducted and recorded by staff; however, physical sleep checks every 10 minutes were not consistently carried out in line with regulatory requirements. The matter was addressed immediately with all staff members. Going forward, staff will ensure that physical sleep checks are completed every 10 minutes for all sleeping children and accurately recorded on the sleep monitoring records

Supporting documentation submitted

Safe Sleep:

The service submitted its safe sleep policy.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23 Safe Sleep.

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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)

Twelve staff had first aid responder training in the service on the day of inspection, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)

(a) There was first aid box safely stored and easily accessible to staff on the premises.

(b) the first aid box was adequate to the children attending the pre-school service on the day of inspection.

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) A record of the fire drills that take place monthly was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 19th February 2026.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 9th February 2026, and the smoke alarms was dated 9th February 2026.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service in appropriate positions near exits, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

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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

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 80 pre-school children attending the service on a full day care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.