

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL013
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Name of Service:	Bocan Community Creche
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Address of Service:	Bocan, Culdaff, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 CYK1
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Doherty
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM	35
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner & S Mc Kenna
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

Bocan Community Creche is a not-for-profit service situated in a rural part of County Donegal, near the town of Culdaff. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional care to children aged 0-6 years and is open from 8am to 6pm. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The service operates from a single-story, purpose-built premises. There are four care rooms currently in operation, the baby room, the wobbler room, junior preschool room and pre-school room. There is also a sensory room beside the junior preschool room. There is a total of four garden spaces available to the pre-school children on the premises. This includes a covered outdoor area that the baby, wobbler room and junior pre-school children can access directly from their room. Beside the covered outdoor area is an open yard area, where the preschool children can access directly from their room. To the front of the premises, there is a net-covered garden space with football goals and climbing ladders, this space is beside another fenced space housing a polytunnel. There is a kitchen on site where meals and snacks are prepared.

Staffing

There were 44 adults employed in service at the time of inspection. This included a manager, relief staff, a cleaner and kitchen staff. There were 14 adults working in the service on the day of inspection, 1 manager, 12 staff and 1 kitchen staff member. The Registered Provider is not on the premises daily. The manager is the person in charge and there was a named deputy person in charge available on the premises.

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

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- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,10,11,19,22,23,25,27, and 28, however, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Statutory Notices		
Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN1502	29/04/2026	Evidence of International police vetting was available; however, it was not translated for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of more than six consecutive months and had direct access to children
Status	The registered provider submitted corrective and preventive actions, which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	
Improvement Notice IN1501	29/04/2026	Three Radiators in a care room being used by the service exceeded recommended temperatures of 50°C.
Status	The registered provider submitted corrective and preventive actions, which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	

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Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(2) A registered provider of a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 7 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

The service was found to be operating an additional room adjacent to the main building that was not included in the current registration. No written notification was submitted to the agency for a change in circumstance for this new space in use.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The room was immediately put out of use.

An application for CIC was looked at. However, having sought advice from DCCC and our insurance company they are both happy that we treat it as an outing. Risk assessments have now been completed and are completed for each visit to the adjacent room.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of insurance attach and risk assessment.

Checklist submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 8 notification of change of circumstances.

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.*

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Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that.

(a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.

(b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on the inspection and through discussion with the registered provider onsite, it was determined that 8 new staff members had been employed since the last inspection. The references on file for 36 staff were compliant upon the service's last inspection; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. Of the 8 new staff employed, the following was available on file;

(a) Five written, validated references from past employers.

(b) Eleven written, validated references from reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting for 36 staff reviewed upon the last inspection met regulatory compliance; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the 8 new staff.

(d) Employment records of 36 staff employed were reviewed at the services' last inspection and regulatory compliance was achieved; therefore, were not reviewed upon this inspection.

A review of the employment history for the eight newly employed staff demonstrated that three adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. Three police vetting certificates were available.

(4) Documentary evidence reviewed at the last inspection for 4 childcare staff. Upon this inspection, of the 8 new staff employed, 1 staff member was employed to work with preschool children, and they held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification for the remaining 7 new staff was not required as they were employed in a training scheme or school-aged care capacity.

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(7) There were records which demonstrated that new staff members had undergone an induction. Management and staff also discussed “toolbox meetings” in the care room with management and regular team meetings.

Non-Compliance Information

9 (2)(d) *See statutory notice section in relation to improvement notice IN1501 served.*

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The inspectors reviewed the following policies; Risk Management, Supervision of Staff, Outings and Safe Sleep. These policies contained information to support staff in safe and effective practices.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The risk management policy provided did not state;
 - The risk assessment record must show who is involved in the risk assessment process.
 - How long risk management records will be kept.
2. The safe sleep policy was incomplete and did not detail;
 - What supervision is provided to sleeping children.
3. The staff supervision and appraisal policy outlined that staff appraisals “will be carried out for each staff member within the first six months of appointment” and “before the end of their probationary period, and annually thereafter”. It stated that “appraisals must be recorded and records kept”. Of the 8 new staff employed, 4 were directly employed by the service, and the remainder were on training schemes. Of the 4 directly employed staff, there were no records to demonstrate that these were carried out in line with the service’s policy.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Policies were read and reviewed.

1. Risk management policy updated and will be reviewed annually or alongside legislation
2. Safe sleep policy was completed with detail of supervision added
3. Staff appraisal forms were issued and completed and with each staff member.

The service will continue to follow and review our policies on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

All policies submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 10, policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service.

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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained throughout the inspection.
- (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.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

Basic Needs

Mealtimes were observed to be child-led and relaxed, with conversations observed between staff and children. Children were encouraged to feed themselves where appropriate with support given by staff when required. The children in the baby and wobbler rooms joined at dinner time and were observed to use tables and chairs and highchairs which were all positioned so the group could sit together, with close adult supervision and interactions. The children in the Baby and Wobbler room had their nappies changed in line with the daily routine and more often where care needs required.

Attention was given to children's self-care with noses cleaned and spare changes of clothes provided when needed. Outdoor overalls are provided for each care room for use in inclement weather conditions.

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Information is shared with parents through digital application which details children's sleep, eating and toileting patterns as well as observations and photos.

Sleep needs of children were met in line with their individual care needs, and children were observed to sleep in the cot room outside of the routine sleep time after dinner.

Rest areas in the baby and wobbler rooms included soft seating, mats and cushions providing areas for children to rest and relax during their day.

All children were observed to experience a change of environment on the day of inspection, and were dressed appropriately for the warm weather, with the use of sun hats and suncream for children playing in areas exposed to the sun.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival was warm and welcoming. The children were actively engaged in play and activities with the staff. The children appeared familiar with those who cared for them and were observed to call on staff for help when required. The staff were observed communicating using positive, soft and gentle tones while communicating with the children. The staff were observed to treat each child with respect, addressing each child by name, and familiarity with the child's home life was demonstrated through discussions with children about their family members, and going to the beach.

Communication with parents is in person and also using a digital application, which details children's sleep, eating and toileting patterns as well as observations and photos. Partnership with parents was observed to be promoted, and staff discussed the recent grandparents' day which was celebrated within the service.

Regular contact is maintained with parents. An open-door policy is in place, and parents are welcome to meet with management when required, which was observed on the day of inspection. Records provided by management following a recent incident included details and steps taken by the service, and the communication pathways between management, staff, parents and the board of management.

Physical And Material Environment

The care rooms were comfortable, pleasant and laid out well to suit the needs of the children present.

Space for younger babies and children to crawl and engage in floor play was provided. A wide variety of materials were provided for children's play, and care rooms were set up in designated interest areas.

The baby room had soft floor mats with many musical toys, a pull-up bar and mirror, blocks, books, teddies and a play kitchen with materials. Additional play materials were stored on shelves in the care room.

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Materials were freely available and accessible to children on low-level shelves and boxes at children's level, nurturing independence to retrieve and self-care to return. The display of artworks was on the room walls, including many artwork pieces in line with the recent theme of the farm. Family photos and birthday charts were also displayed.

The children attending the baby and wobbler rooms enjoyed sensory play with sand, singing songs, playing outdoors on the slide and "going on a bear hunt activity".

The tables and chairs and highchairs were suitable for the children age and stage of development.

Telomere outdoor area located off the baby and wobbler rooms had a concrete surface, surrounded by secure walls and gates. The materials available included chalkboards, tunnels, slides, benches and ride on truck for children use.

Preschool and Junior Preschool Rooms

The learning environment in both rooms were designed to support the development of the children, featuring wall displays that prioritize the child's voice and interests. This included jigsaw-shaped posters of favourite activities and child-decorated art projects like the "delicious pizza" teams and a "Birthday Tree" with butterflies. These creative elements are balanced by artistic educational posters such as colourful numbers and days of the week, alongside a large television used before lunch while children settle in place. The room is well-equipped for diverse play styles, offering a construction corner with magnetic blocks, a soft play area with mats for safe movement, and dedicated sand and water trays for sensory messy play. Imaginative and social play are facilitated through a home corner, a small restaurant and shop area, and a variety of toys including dolls, cars, and Lego blocks. Accessibility is a key feature, with low shelving allowing children to independently choose from puzzles, jigsaws, and arts and crafts materials. The space is functionally furnished with two tables and child-sized chairs that serve as a hub for both focused tabletop activities and mealtimes, ensuring a supportive setting for all daily routines.

The service demonstrates a commitment to inclusive communication and practice, beginning with a detailed activity planner and posters illustrating daily routines and "Lámh signs" prominently displayed at the room's entrance. Cultural diversity is actively embraced and visible through signage in multiple languages, fostering a sense of belonging for all families. Each child's individual progress is documented in personal activity books that showcase their daily participation in arts, crafts, and various developmental tasks.

During the inspection, staff demonstrated positive, clear, and encouraging communication, interacting effectively with children during play to foster creativity. Staff were observed actively supporting the development of both

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fine motor skills, through afternoon arts and crafts, and gross motor skills, which are primarily exercised in the outdoor area where children spend much of their day. Staff discussed communication with parents and informed that communication with parents is done using a handover process where detailed information regarding the child's well-being and daily experiences is exchanged both every morning and at the end of each day. The service also uses an application to communicate with parents.

The service had multiple outdoor areas designated to each room. The outdoor area for the junior and senior preschool rooms consisted of a large concrete/ soft surface area. This square shaped area had panoramic views of the countryside and was enclosed by high fencing all around. The area contained swings and climbing frames. There were tyres for children to practice balance and coordination skills and ride on tractors, cars and push bikes available for children to expel energy and use their gross motor skills. To the side of the service was a smaller garden area with grass surface and an outdoor sink for sensory messy play. To the side/ front was an astroturf football pitch with swings and football goals.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that adequate and suitable nutritious meals were available for each preschool child attending the service. The cook confirmed that the service provided balanced and nutritious meals in line with the service's healthy eating policy. A four-week menu plan is in place based on the children's food preferences and likes. Breakfast, morning snack, dinner and afternoon snack are provided by the service. Dinner served was lentil and vegetable soup with potatoes and bacon. All meals are cooked by the cook onsite. Extra portions were available to the children and alternatives were proved to children who wanted something other than what was being served on the day. Children had access to drinking water and drinks bottles all day and were seen to have their drinks with them on the tables at mealtimes.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The main door to the service was secure on the inspector's arrival, preventing unauthorised access to the service by an adult or a child leaving the service unsupervised.
- Daily risk assessments were in place both indoors and outdoors in the service.
- Cleaning materials were stored on high shelving out of children's reach.
- The equipment in the care rooms was in good condition with toys stored in an orderly fashion in boxes.
- Blind cords were secured to the wall.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- The service was clean and in a hygienic condition on the day of the inspection.
- Cleaning records were in place in each room which stated the areas to be cleaned each day.
- Warm water, soap and paper towels were available for effective handwashing.
- Non-touch bins were in place in all sanitary areas.
- Mouth toy boxes were in use in the younger care rooms.
- Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with service policy and appropriate infection control measures.
- Soothers were stored in individual containers and staff outlined correct cleaning and sterilising procedures.

Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was administered on the day of inspection.
- Records were available in the junior preschool room which demonstrated that adults were aware of the correct procedures to be taken for the safe administration of medicine

Safe Sleep:

- Children over the age of two slept on low-level, stackable beds and were supervised by staff while sleeping.
- Children under two were provided with individual cots.

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- Each child had access to their own bed linen.
- Sleep checks were carried out on sleeping children. Written records detailed the child's name, the date and time of the check, the position, breathing pattern and colour of the child and the adults' initials.
- The temperature of the cot room and the baby room when used for sleep time was monitored and recorded. The temperature of the baby room when used for sleep was 20.6°C and the cot room at 21.7°C. All children present were over 1 year old.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drill records were in place and conducted monthly
- On the day evacuation doors remained clear ensuring safe egress from the service in an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

See statutory notice section in relation to improvement notice IN1502 served.

Infection Control:

1. There were no paper towels for effective hand hygiene in an additional care room being used by the service.
2. There was no foot operated bin in an additional care room that the service.

Safe Sleep:

3. Two children were observed to take their milk bottles to bed and lie down on stackable beds to have their bottle before going to sleep. This is against safe sleep practises and poses a choking risk to children. It is acknowledged that the service's safe sleep policy outlines "no bottles will be permitted in cots, unless permitted by parent and disclaimer is signed" However, the disclaimers reviewed did not detail that bottles of milk were permitted while children lay to sleep.

Outing:

4. The service had recently taken part in an outing to a farm; however, there were no risk assessment records available. This is not in line with the service policy, which details that "risk assessments of outings/and or travel" is required. It is acknowledged that a template named "preschool farm trip risk assessment" was available, although it was not completed for the outing in line with the services policy requirements.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1 & 2. Additional room was put out of use until all stocks were replenished. 1 & 2 Risk assessment and checklist complied to ensure sufficient stocks available in adjacent room

Safe Sleep:

3. Parents were informed that children will no longer be allowed to take milk bottles to bed. Three children now receive their bottles before going to bed

Outing:

4. New folder was compiled with access for templates to be documented for every outing. Four risk assessments have now been updated and folder available for staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Policies submitted.

Safe Sleep:

Policies submitted.

Outing:

Policies submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23, safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.

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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

The registered provider ensured that.

(1) At all times, there was a person trained in first aid for children immediately available to the children always attending the service. There were 16 adults with FAR training in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

The first aid boxes available to the preschool children were insufficiently stocked. An inadequate number of sterile wipes, and sterile dressings for the number of children in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

New stock immediately ordered. Additional stocks have been purchased over and above minimum required monthly checks to be completed to ensure adequate stock at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Pictures submitted.

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Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 25, first aid.

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

On the day of the inspection the inspectors observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance. The staff were observed positioning themselves both indoors and outdoors to allow effective engagement with the children, offering support when required and attentive supervision. During mealtimes, staff sat close by the tables whilst, ensuring help was given to children when required. The outdoor area was designed to ensure that the children could be kept within sight and sound of the staff. The children used an additional space in an adjacent building to the service. There were ten children using an additional space from 9.30am to 11.15am supervised by two staff. The children were observed walking from the additional space back to the service via a carpark. One staff took the lead and the children followed in a line followed closely by the second staff.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured adequate insurance was in place for the full day care service for 66 children up until 27 March 2027.