

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL062
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Name of Service:	Letterkenny Community Playgroup Childcare Centre CLG
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Address of Service:	County Enterprise Business Park, Ballyraine, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 PF29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Eoin Gildea
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	81	PM	64
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner & S Kileen
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

Letterkenny Community Playgroup Childcare Ltd. is a not-for-profit pre-school service based in Letterkenny town. The service provides full day, part-time and sessional pre-school care to children aged 0 to 6 years and operates between 7.45am and 5.45pm each weekday. The premises consists of a purpose-built standalone two-story building situated within an enterprise park on the outskirts of the town with ample nearby parking to facilitate drop-off and collection. There are six pre-school rooms, two of which are operated from single units in a separate two-story premises within the same site. Children from all rooms had access to the designated outdoor play area to the front of the main building. There is also storage rooms, an office, a staff room, staff toilets and a kitchen in the main building.

Staffing

The service employs 26 adults, which includes the registered provider and the person in charge. The registered provider does not work directly in the service. On the day of inspection, 20 adults were working directly with the children, alongside one student who was also present. Two of the adults were employed through the Community Employment (C.E.) scheme, and one adult was working on an employment activation scheme. There was also two cooks and a deputy person in charge present on the day of inspection.

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 and premises. 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, 16(1)(a), 19, 22, 23 & 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. 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 deputy 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-

- (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) 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, which identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) On the day of the inspection, the deputy person in charge confirmed that there were 26 adults employed to work in the service in total. In addition to this there was two of the adults who were employed through the Community Employment (C.E.) scheme. One adult was working on an employment activation scheme. There was

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also a student working in the service. A total of 30 recruitment files were reviewed, and the following information was available:

- (a) There were 33 written references from a past employers on file.
- (b) There were 18 written references from a source other than a past employers were on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 30 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(4) Of the 30 adults' files reviewed, 25 evidenced that they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a)(b)

1. Nine references from either past employers or from a source other than a past employers where not on file for four adults.
2. A total of 26 references reviewed had not been validated by the registered provider.

(4) The registered provider did not ensure that each employee working directly with children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. On the day of inspection, one adult did not have the required certification that they held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. It is acknowledged that statement of results was provided.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a)(b)

All references have been rechecked and verified where needed. A check list has been put on file of all documents required for inspection.

(4) Staff qualification is now on file. Regular checks will be done to ensure all documents needed are on file for each staff and new staff when they commence employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

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Photographic evidence and documents submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9.

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) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2) On the day of inspection, the minimum adult/child ratio was maintained.

On the morning of the inspection:

Caterpillar Room: Three adults cared for 8 children aged between 8 months to 1 year and 6 months.

Butterfly Room: Two adults cared for 10 children aged between 1 years to 2 years.

Lady Bug Room: Four adults cared for 15 children aged between 2 years to 3 years.

Rainbow Room: Three adults cared for 14 children aged between 3 years to 4 years.

Giraffe Room: Four adults cared for 17 children aged between 3 years to 5 years.

Bizzy Bees Room: Four adults cared for 17 children aged between 4 years to 5 years.

In the afternoon:

Caterpillar Room: Three adults cared for 9 children aged between 8 months to 1 year and 6 months.

Butterfly Room: Two adults cared for 10 children aged between 1 years to 2 years.

Lady Bug Room: Three adults cared for 16 children aged between 2 years to 3 years.

Rainbow Room: Three adults cared for 12 children aged between 3 years to 4 years.

Giraffe Room: Three adults cared for 17 children aged between 3 years to 5 years.

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Bizzy Bees Room: Room not in use in the afternoon.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was record of employment and experience on file for all adults employed in the service. The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor was on file for review on the day of inspection in the form of CV.

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:

The service has a healthy eating policy in place, and the main meal of the day was prepared in the service kitchen. On the day of the inspection, the meal was pancakes, cheese and ham. Children who refused any part of the meal were offered an alternative. Children in the sessional service brought their snacks from home and fridges, which were provided in all rooms to store all perishable items. Portable drinking water was observed to be available in all care rooms throughout the day. Children who wore nappies had them changed regularly throughout the day and at other times when required and adults were observed to engage attentively with children during the procedure.

Older children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the bathroom independently, staff members stood in earshot to prompt and assist if required. Children who required sleep were facilitated in a separate sleep

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room where one member of staff remained with them for the duration. Individual inclusion plans where needed were implemented in line with the child's own needs. This plan detailed the current developmental stage of the child, the interventions needed by the staff to always ensure the child's learning and development in the service across all developmental areas. Multidisciplinary involvement was implemented into the plans, which were inclusive of the family, AIM support worker, and relevant healthcare professionals.

Supporting Relationships:

The service has a key worker system in place with each staff member assigned a group of children to form close relationships with. Communication with parents takes place via a notice board for parents, a handover process and text messages which are used to send messages to parents and updates in relation to their child's day. Each room in the service had a dedicated family wall with pictures of their families. Each child's birthday was celebrated on the wall of each respective room in different ways ie birthday flowers decorated by the children in the service. Staff interactions were observed to be kind to the children in the service, praising the children's efforts and achievements. Staff appeared to have a good understanding of the children's needs and individual support plans were available for those children who required them. Children in the older care rooms were encouraged to assist with various tasks which promoted independence. After each transition children were encouraged to tidy up with support from the adults.

Physical and Material Resources

The 'Giraffe Room' was laid out with several different interest areas for the preschool child such as a dress up area, construction area with a "tool" set, a home corner with a play kitchen, and a rest area. Materials to facilitate children's learning such as puzzles, open ended objects and prewriting materials were stored in labelled containers and were accessible to the children. On the morning of the inspection, the children and their staff were seated together at different tables engaging in different activities such as art and crafts to use their imagination and fine motor skills. The children appeared happy and were observed engaging positively with each other and their respective key workers.

The "Bizzy Bees room" consists of a large playroom with ample space for the older children to move around freely and direct their own sense of play. On the day of inspection children were observed to be accessing resources of their choosing from low level shelving and participate in individual and group activities. After snack time children sit with the staff for circle time. This consisted of the staff singing educational songs and the children joining in.

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After circle time children explored the room and were drawn to different interest areas such as sand and water for sensory play, playing with dolls and doll houses and some children choose to make arts and crafts. Staff supervise each interest area and encourage the children to use imagination through play.

The “Rainbows room” is equipped with a variety of resources including small world animals, water and sand play. Construction areas, home corners, dress up and a variety of tabletop activities to include jigsaws, magnets, puzzles and arts and crafts. Children played in different interest areas. Some children were observed playing in the sand and water experiencing sensory play. Other children were observed using clay and art materials using their fine motor skills and imagination.

Programme of Activities

Evidence of the curriculum followed was displayed in artwork on the care room walls. The current theme observed was learning about summer and children had completed various art activities regarding this theme. Individual observations were documented and recorded in individual journals which identified learnings and goals to be achieved.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The environment in the Butterfly Room did not support the pre-school children in initiating and sustaining play activities. The room layout failed to adequately meet the needs of the children present due to a lack of clearly defined interest areas and insufficient play materials. Observations indicated that the layout heavily restricted child-initiated activity, resulting in mainly adult-led tasks. Management acknowledged this issue when it was brought to their attention and confirmed they have already sought external advice.
2. Staff members missed valuable opportunities to engage in purposeful interactions, language development, and social development. This was evident when staff did not sit and engage with the children during mealtimes. Instead, staff were observed preparing the room for sleep time, which detracted from sustained and purposeful interactions with the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The service is now working with “Betterstart” to provide an enriching environment for the children in the Butterflies Room. They have focused on providing defined areas for the children to enjoy. The focus has been on providing a home corner, construction corner and a cosy area. Management will ensure that all rooms have defined areas to enhance children’s learning. Management will ensure there are enough resources available in each room.

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2. Additional staff will be available at snack time to help set up for sleep. This will allow the core staff to sit and engage with children whilst they are eating. The service has separated two playrooms to create a more natural flow from snack to sleep time. The children will have meals in one room and can transition to their beds which will be set up in the other room when they have finished eating. When children wake up from their sleep the other room will be set up for them to play or do activities. Management will ensure that room leaders and staff know that they need to engage with the children during mealtimes. Room leaders will delegate to others to set up for sleep allowing the core staff to interact with the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection under regulation 19. This regulation is now complaint.

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

Snack time in the service took place at approximately 10:30am, followed by lunch at 12pm. Further light snacks were provided later in the afternoon. The service has an on-site kitchen, and a hot meal is prepared daily for the children. A weekly menu was available and included a variety of meal options. During the inspection, the morning snack was observed in the Giraffe room. Children sat together at suitably sized tables and chairs, and staff interacted positively with them throughout the meal. Children were encouraged to feed themselves, with staff offering support where required. All children had access to their drink bottles, which were placed beside them. Snacks provided were healthy in nature, including chopped apples, mixed fruit, rice cakes, and small sandwiches. Children appeared relaxed and engaged in conversation with each other while eating. Staff reported that the service maintains effective communication with families regarding healthy eating and actively promotes healthy food choices. Children were encouraged to take their time finishing their snack. When finished, they independently put away their lunch boxes and returned to play. Drink bottles were stored on an accessible shelf, allowing children to obtain drinks throughout the day as needed. Dinner time was also observed in which included chicken, vegetables potatoes and gravy.

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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 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.
- The internal doors in the service were secure, with a stairgate fitted at the top of the stairs.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins out of reach of children.
- Blind cords were secured to the wall.
- The temperature of the service on the day of inspection was within the required range.
- Handrails were provided on stairs.

Infection Control:

- Aprons and gloves were used during nappy changing time and adults and children demonstrated correct handwashing procedures.
- Tables were wiped down after snack time.

Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was administered on the day of inspection. Records for previously administered medicine were available for review. On discussion with the staff, they were familiar with the correct procedures to safely administer medication when required.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.
- The Sleep room temperature was recorded at within the acceptable range in line with the age of the children.

Fire Safety:

- On the day evacuation doors remained clear ensuring safe egress from the service in an emergency.
- Fire drills were done monthly, and records were available for review.

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Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 24 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes for two adults as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years
2. The person in charges signature was missing from 5 out of 10 incident and accident forms reviewed in the Giraffe room. The person in charges signatures was also missing from 2 out of 10 incident and accident forms reviewed in the bizzzy bee's room.

Infection Control:

3. The foot operated bins in the Giraffe room and sanitary area were broken and needed to be replaced; children were seen lifting lids of bins with soiled paper towel disposal.
4. Children's hands were not observed to be washed after eating or before going down for a sleep, which creates a risk of cross-contamination.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was submitted to the inspectorate in relation to two adults.
2. All forms have now been signed by the person in charge. All staff have been made aware that it is their responsibility to get the person in charge to sign accident forms on the day they happen and before being presented to parent/s to sign. Management will check accident books regular to ensure they are being signed.

Infection Control:

3. The bin in the Giraffe room has been replaced with a new foot operated bin. The bin in the EECE building has also been replaced. Management will do weekly checks of all foot operated bins in the rooms to ensure they are fit for purpose. Staff have been asked to report all broken equipment to management. Management will ensure all staff are made aware of the nappy changing policy and infection control policy. Policies have been handed out to all staff.
4. An Infection control policy and nappy changing policy was distributed to all staff members. Management will do regular checks to ensure handwashing is preformed after eating, and before going to sleep. Management will ensure all staff are made aware of the nappy changing policy and infection control policy. Policies have been circulated to all staff.

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Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection under regulation 23. This regulation is now complaint.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of a current insurance cover valid 28/03/2026 to 27/03/2027 for full day care. Insurance was also available for part-time service from 28/03/2026 to 27/03/2027.

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

The registered provider ensured that the premises of the service was-

- (a) of sound and stable structure.
- (b) safe and secure.
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.

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Non-Compliance Information

(d) In the main building, the downstairs playrooms walls were marked, chipped and required painting. These rooms included the Ladybug room, the Caterpillar room and the Butterfly room.

(e) The service was not equipped with adequate nappy changing facilities to accommodate the number of children who were in nappies in the service on the day of inspection. There were two nappy changing rooms in the downstairs of the main building to cater for 30 children in nappies. Nappy changing facilities are required at a ratio of 1 to 11 children who require nappy changing, therefore an additional nappy changing unit was required. The service also needs to install an additional wash hand basin to cater for the numbers of children in nappies in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) All walls have been washed, and visible marked walls have been covered over with pictures and white boards. Chipped walls will be painted before the new term. Management will do regular checks of the walls in each of the playrooms.

(e) The service has arranged for works to put another nappy changing facility outside the baby room; this will be adjacent to the sink inside the baby room so the service can install a sink for handwashing. Currently the service has the requirement of 1:11 for nappy changing and hand hygiene (due to lower numbers attending for summer). The service will have an additional nappy changing facility ready in September 2026. Management will ensure that there are enough nappy changing facilities for the number of children in nappies attending.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider were reviewed by the Inspector and the assurances given that remedial action will be carried out prior to September 2026 have been accepted. This regulation will be reviewed at the next inspection.