

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH024
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Name of Service:	ABC Childsplay Creche
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Address of Service:	Townspark, Castletown Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 HD82
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gerard McDonnell
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Road Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	S.Skinnader
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).

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Description of service

ABC Childsplay Creche was established in 2002 and is a privately run childcare service. The service provides a sessional service to pre-school children from 1 - 6 years of age. The service operates from 9am – 12.15pm Monday - Friday. The service is situated in a purpose-built building in the town of Dundalk Co. Louth. There are 3 Preschool Rooms, sanitary accommodations, a sensory room and a kitchen. To the rear of the building there is an outdoor play area.

Staffing

There are seven staff employed in the service including the person in charge who all work directly with the preschool children.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

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

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

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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.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN1302	24/04/2026	One staff member did not have documentary evidence of international police vetting being obtained as requested at the last inspection.
Status	The registered provider provided a written response detailing that international police vetting is no longer required. The staff member provided clearer detail on their length of stay which was within the 6-month timeframe. This response was accepted and addressed the Improvement Notice.	

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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

(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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and a system in place to designate a named deputy person to deputise as required. The deputy person in charge was on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The staff files for all 7 members of staff were reviewed on the last inspection and were fully compliant with the exception of international police vetting for 1 staff member.

(c) All 7 Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed were compliant as they were all dated within the 3-year timeframe as specified by the regulatory notice.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that all 7 members of staff, who worked directly with the pre-school children had a minimum Level 5 childcare qualification.

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Non-Compliance Information

(d) See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN1302 served.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

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

(3) When the inspector arrived unannounced to the service there were 3 rooms in operation i.e. Pods A, B and C.

The following adult: child ratios were observed:

- One staff member with 2 children in Pod A (upstairs) aged 2 years and 6 months to 2 years and 10 months.
- One staff member in Pod B with 4 children aged 3 - 4 years. One staff member was employed as additional support in the room.
- One staff member in Pod C with 8 children aged 3 - 5 years. One staff member was employed as a floater pre-dominantly in this room.

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

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Compliance Information

There were 3 rooms in operation on the day of inspection Pods A, B, and C.

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

Basic needs:

- On the day of inspection, the children from all care rooms spent a large period of time outside in the good weather. The children were observed to move freely in this area and staff assisted their play activities.
- The toilet trained children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and discreet supervision was also provided by staff. Children were brought in from outside to use the toilet when required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting. Nappy changing facilities were available for any child who required a nappy to be changed.
- The morning snack was brought in by the children however the deputy person in charge stated that funding had been received by the service under the "Bia Blasta" scheme for the service to supply all lunches for the children. This was to commence the week following inspection. The children had access to their drinks in their bags or from the preschool rooms, when required.
- Attention was given to personal care for example a child who needed assistance had their hair fixed.

Supporting Relationships

- In all rooms soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the staff and children for example *"oh I love that"*, *"good girl ..."*, *"god job ... in giving"*.
- The staff were observed to engage with the children in their chosen activities sitting down on the ground with them and also offering to play with them in a game of hide and seek – *"we're gonna count"*.
- Staff reported most communication with parents was informal at drop-off and collection times.
- A key worker system was in operation in the service. The key worker was responsible for recording on "the app" daily activities such as toileting and food intake of their child.
- Staff were aware of supports that were in place for a child with additional needs.
- A new child that was just settling in was provided with support and some 'shadowing' by the staff.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Work was just being completed on converting the un-used sleep room to a newly decorated sensory room which would be accessible to all children. The room was inviting and decorated with various lights and rainbow-coloured drapes. There were sensory toys, a lamp, equipment and seating.

(3)(a) The outdoor area was situated to the rear of the premises. The children had access to a mud kitchen with some supplies, plus rockers and seesaws, basketball hoops, balls, a car made from some seating and a steering wheel, chalk for drawing on the safety surface area and tyres for balancing. There was also a foam seat, wooden benches, playhouses and a picnic bench plus small diggers to move little piles of gravel along the fence.

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:

1. External doors were secured when the inspector arrived to the service preventing children accessing the carpark outside.
2. Children were supervised on the stairs coming down and going up.
3. Cleaning equipment was stored appropriately.
4. Medicines were stored out of the reach of the children.

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Infection Control:

5. Anti-bacterial spray was available and used to clean down the tabletops. Staff confirmed that the toys and equipment that were cleaned with hot soapy water.
6. In Pod A, a mouthed toys box was available where toys that had been placed in the mouth were removed to here, washed and then returned to the play area.
7. There was a supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, single use hand towels and liquid soap throughout the service.
8. The sanitary accommodation upstairs was open and available for the use of the children attending Pod A.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In Pod B the lid of the shell shaped sand pit was cracked and was a potential pinch and injury hazard.
2. The record of servicing for the fire extinguishers and smoke alarm system indicated that they had not been serviced on an annual basis as required to ensure that they are operating correctly in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The entire sand pit has been replaced. The risk assessment has been updated to include daily sand pit checks to ensure this is not overlooked in the future. Staff have been updated in the risk assessment checks.
2. The fire records of servicing for the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms have been serviced and completed in May 2026. Fire extinguishers and smoke alarm services have been added to the a new manager's annual checklist. A new fire company has been employed to carry out quarterly checks to ensure this is not a recurring issue.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence and copies of most recent service records fr the fire fight equipment and fire alarms.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the registered provider's response and supporting documentation. This has been accepted and the non-compliances are addressed.

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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 firefighting 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 was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service, the last recorded 26/3/26.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment dated 29/7/24 and 17/11/22 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence was available of adequate insurance cover for up to 35 children expiring on 27/3/27.