

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK022
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Name of Service:	Bernies Pre School
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Address of Service:	Hillview House, Bottomstown, Knockainey, Co Limerick
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Eircode:	V35 P860
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Name of Registered Provider:	Bernie Cleary
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	20/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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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Conditions if applicable

Not applicable

Description of service

Bernie's Pre-school Naionra is a private sessional pre-school service located in Knockainey, County Limerick. It provides a service for children aged between 2 and 6 years. It operates Monday to Friday from 8.45 am to 11.45 am. On the day of inspection, 12 pre-school children were in attendance. The service is run from a large, well-resourced, purpose-designed playroom within the registered provider's home. Sanitary facilities are available adjacent to the pre-school room. Extensive outdoor play areas include an adventurous garden space and a sheltered outdoor play area next to the pre-school room. Outdoor sanitary facilities are also available.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and the designated person in charge of running the service. A second staff is employed at the pre-school each day. Both staff hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19, 23 and 29.

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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 registered provider, 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*

(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.*

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(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 registered provider was present on the day of the inspection. A person to deputise if needed was also available.

(b) The staff roster indicated that both staff attend the service every day from time of opening to time of closure.

(2)(a) Two written references were available for both staff working at the service.

(b) References were from previous employers or from reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the registered provider and for the second person employed to work at the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required for either staff member working at the service.

(4) Both held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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

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- (1) On the day of the inspection there were 12 pre-school children under the supervision of the registered provider and a second staff member.
- (3) The adult/child ratio was correct in the facility on the day of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that at all times the number of children and staff present in the service met the requirements of the regulations.

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

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS

- On the day of the inspection the pre-school supported children's learning, development, and well-being within daily activities.
- A healthy eating policy was in place, with parents providing nutritious snacks and drinks, guided by the service's healthy eating policy. Perishable items were refrigerated if needed.
- Unrestricted access to toilets was provided, both indoors and in the outdoor play area. Handwashing facilities included hot water, liquid soap, and paper towels. Waste disposal was managed with foot pedal-operated, lidded bins.
- Protective clothing was available for messy play, and a sheltered outdoor area ensured outdoor play in all weather conditions.
- A rest area with soft furnishings was available for relaxation.
- Children spend extended periods outdoors daily.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

- The indoor environment was well-organised with interest areas for imaginative play, dress-up, home corners, construction play, and arts and crafts.

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- Children's artwork was displayed on the walls, alongside educational posters on opposites, literacy, and numeracy.
- A large community-themed poster featured local landmarks such as the church, shops, school, and community centre.
- The preschool emphasised natural outdoor learning, incorporating sand play, water play, clay, and gardening.
- Outdoor spaces included:
 - Lawns and gardens for running, cycling, planting, and gardening.
 - Ride-on toys for use in a spacious driveway.
 - Fairy gardens created by the children.
 - A large sandpit for play.
 - Outdoor tables and chairs for dining and tabletop activities in good weather.

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:

Adequate measures were taken at the service to ensure a safe, secure, and well-monitored environment for all preschool children.

Controlled Access: The gate to the premises was locked with a secure system in place to prevent children from leaving unsupervised.

Emergency Exits: The fire exits were unobstructed and clear.

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Safe Play Equipment: Toys and play materials were age-appropriate, well-maintained, and free from hazards like pinch points, crush points, or sharp edges. All ride-on toys were in good condition, and all were safely stored in a designated storage shed when not in use.

Proper Waste Disposal: Waste was kept inaccessible indoors and outdoors, with foot pedal-operated, lidded bins ensuring safe disposal. Wheelie bins were stored in an area inaccessible to the children when outdoors.

Chemical Safety: Cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach on a high shelf in the preschool room.

Outdoor Safety: Exit gates were secured to prevent children from accessing unsafe areas, and supervision was continuous during outdoor play.

Infection Control:

A high standard of operational hygiene was observed throughout the service. Tabletops were cleaned and disinfected prior to snack time. Hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were available at the sink in the bathroom and in the preschool room to ensure hygienic hand washing by staff and children.

Fire Safety:

All firefighting equipment was in working order, easily visible and available if required. A designated fire assembly point was appointed outdoors.

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

(a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection. All fences and railing surrounding the outdoor play spaces were in good condition.

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(b) The premises appeared safe and secure. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.

(c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.

(d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.

(e) There were an adequate number of toilets available in the service for both the number of children and adults present. An outdoor toilet ensured staff could supervise children more closely when using the facility.