

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH019
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Name of Service:	St. Kieran's Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	St. Kieran's Community Centre, Tormey Villas, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 W7PS
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michael Grehan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	15
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O' Connor Hughes
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

This community service is registered as a full day care service and is currently operating between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis.

The Early Years' Service is co-located in the grounds of St. Kieran's Community Centre and operates out of a purpose built two storey building. The toddler room is located on the ground floor of the building. A sleep room and a kitchenette are provided. The pre-school room is located on the first floor.

Two outdoor play areas are located to the front and side of the premises. Onsite parking and set down facilities are provided. The service is situated on the outskirts of the town of Athlone, County Westmeath.

Staffing

The registered provider employs twelve staff members. Two designated persons in charge and five staff members were working directly with the children on the 24 June 2026. A cook/cleaner is employed in the service.

The registered provider does not work directly with children. Both designated persons in charge attended the closing meeting.

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

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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.

Regulation 8 – Change in Circumstance

Regulation 9- Management and recruitment - (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3)(4)

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (2) (8)(a)

Regulation 19- Health, welfare and development of child - (1)(b)

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and play

Regulation 21- Equipment and Materials

Regulation 22- Food and Drink

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25- First aid - (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26- Fire Safety Measures (1)(a)(b) (4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

Regulation 32 – Complaints (1)(2)

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

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The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the persons in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than 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 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Compliance Information

A change in circumstance in respect of the mobile numbers of the service was submitted on the 20 February 2025. This change was accepted by TUSLA registration office.

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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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 persons in charge and deputy were available in the service.

(b)

The designated persons in charge were present for the duration of the inspection.

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Following a review of previous inspection findings, information available on inspection and discussion with one of the designated persons in charge it was determined that two new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 22 January 2025. These two files were reviewed and the following was noted.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available from past employers in respect of the two new staff members.

(c)

A garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of the two new staff members. An in date garda vetting disclosure was available for three staff members who required renewal since the last inspection on the 22 January 2025.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one of the new staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The designated persons in charge ensured that all vetting procedures were in place before the employment of new staff members in the service.

(4)

One of the new staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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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,

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were twenty-three children attending the service supervised directly by seven adults in the morning.

There were fifteen children attending the service supervised by four adults in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

The staff roster reviewed indicated that two adults are on the premises during the hours of operation.

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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;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (h) (i) (j)and (k).

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

A copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013)) of the Act and Regulations was presented for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

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-*
- (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)(b)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. Children were engaged in and enjoyed play activities in the indoor and outdoor environments that included free play, sensory play, creative play and physical play supported by staff members. Children enjoyed freedom of movement as they moved from one play experience to the next. Children were independent and made their own choices of what activities they wish to participate in and what friend they wanted to play with in the pre-school room. Children in the toddler room were actively engaged in singing songs and rhyme actions supported by the staff members.

Suncream was applied and appropriate clothing was worn by children to protect their skin while playing outside in the very hot weather. A portable water station was available to give the children the opportunity to drink regularly in the outdoor play area. Regular nappy changes were carried out for children attending the toddler room. Good communication was observed between the staff member and child during nappy changing. Older

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children were observed to use the toilet independently and wash their hands supervised by staff members. Younger children had the opportunity to rest and sleep in the sleep room. Low level beds were available for children to sleep in the Toddler room. Snacks and meals were planned at regular intervals for children attending on a full day care basis.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Children were happy and content with their carers in the pre-school rooms. Staff used children's individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities and at mealtimes. Positive praise was given to children regularly on completion of activities and tasks. An access and inclusion plan was available for children requiring extra support and assistance. Good teamwork was noted amongst staff.

The service works in partnership with parents and guardians. Parents were observed to collect their children from the pre-school service after the ECCE session concluded. A verbal handover was provided to parents at this time. The person in charge stated information updates and events are shared with parents electronically and by using a short messaging system (SMS). The children's learning journal depicting their learning stories, play and work activities were prepared with an individual photograph and certificate for the upcoming graduation day on the 26 June 2026 to give to parents.

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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

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(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, or

(b) Where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, dress up, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

A sleep room is located adjacent to the toddler room in the service. The sleep room provided two cots for younger children to sleep and rest. Correct safety mattresses were available in the cots. Low level beds were available for rest or sleep. Suitable rest areas were noted in the pre-school rooms.

(3)(a)

The outdoor area was accessed directly from the service. The perimeter was secured by high railings and a gate to the front of the premises. The other outdoor play area was accessible from the toddler room surrounded by metal railings. An absorbent surface was noted. A variety of toys and play equipment for use by the children was available. Interest areas included sand play, water play and a large climbing frame with slide. A sheltered area was available equipped with a table, seating and large play blocks.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

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

Compliance Information

Equipment was well maintained, durable and easy to clean.

The tables and chairs were child sized suitable to each child's age and development.

Age and stage appropriate toys, equipment and materials were accessible to children on low level open shelving.

Personal belongings and bags were stored individually for each child.

There was a variety of suitable and sufficient play materials and equipment to support children for various forms of creative, manipulative, imaginary and free play in the indoor and outdoor play environments in the service.

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 service provides meals and snacks to children attending on a full day care basis. A menu incorporating healthy snacks and meals was available for review.

At 10:30 children enjoyed their snack of bread, cheese and a selection of fruit with milk or water to drink.

At 13:10 the main meal of homemade chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes and beans with gravy was presented by the cook in the service. Children were offered water with their main meal. A refrigerator was available for the storage of perishable food in the main kitchen and in the pre-school rooms.

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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:

Access to the service is through the main door which is locked and secure and a coded lock system and doorbell are used for entry which ensured no unauthorised access to the service.

Risk assessment checklists for the pre-school rooms were available.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed.

Nappy changing logs were maintained for younger children attending the service.

Children's individual nappies and creams were stored correctly in the sanitary accommodation.

Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school rooms and in the sanitary accommodation.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. Medication was stored safely inaccessible to children. Documentation reviewed indicated that correct procedures were in place for the administration of medication. No medication was given during the inspection.

Safe Sleep:

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A sleep log noting the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children indicating children were checked every 10 minutes. The environmental temperature recorded was 21 degrees Celsius in the toddler sleep room.

Fire Safety:

The fire emergency exits were free from obstruction in the premises. A fire assembly point was noted in the outdoor play area of the premises.

Outing:

The designated person in charge stated the service takes an annual outing to a play centre. A risk assessment checklist was reviewed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) has to be approved by a staff member.

(b)

A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service. The inspector signed the visitor book on arrival.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1)

Five adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was located in the pre-school rooms.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the service.

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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 written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 29 May 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment in the premises was serviced on the 20 July 2025. The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 2 March 2026.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the service.

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 current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was the 27 March 2027.

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Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- The service's complaints policy was available and reviewed. The relevant details in respect of (a)(b)(c) were noted in the policy.
- (2)(a)(b)
- Records indicate that the service held information in respect of (a) and (b).