

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017SO501
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Name of Service:	Hopes And Dreams
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Address of Service:	Unit 4 Cartron Village, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 X027
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Casey
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Service type:	Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	03/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen
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

Hopes and Dreams is one of two privately owned services operated by the registered provider. Care and education is provided to children aged between two and six years on a sessional basis. The service operates from 9:00hrs to 12:00hrs each weekday on a school calendar basis. Hopes and Dreams operates from a purposely adapted commercial unit and is located within Carton Village in Sligo. The premises consists of one large open plan care room and an outdoor play area is available to the rear of the service with artificial grass and natural bark.

Staffing

The service employs four staff members who work directly with the preschool children this includes the registered provider.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,23,24,25,27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 24 Checking in and out and record of attendance.

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.

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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*
 - (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-*
- consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
 - (a) *consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
 - (b) *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*
 - (c) *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 deputy person in charge was available on the premises for the duration of the inspection. On a review of staff attendance records the deputy person in charge was always present in the service.

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(c) There was a clear management structure in the service. A governance chart displayed the lines of accountability in the service. On discussion with staff members, they were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that three new adults had been employed since the previous inspection. Three of these new staff members work directly with the children. A total of three files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for one staff member whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

(a) Five written validated references from past employers for three of the adults.

(b) One written validated reference from reputable sources for one of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) From review of employment history of the staff, it was determined that police vetting from the police authorities in another state was not required.

(4) Evidence of completion of 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 was on file for two staff members and one staff member held a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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 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.

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Compliance Information

- (1) There are an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were two adults working directly with 11 children of the morning of the unannounced inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

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 entrance was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises
- Internal doors were secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- Risk assessments on indoor and outdoor play areas were completed daily and noted to be maintained up to date. There was no evidence of hazards in the indoor area, toys and play equipment appeared in good repair and all electrical flexes and cables were in good condition and out of children's reach.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children attending the service.

Infection Control:

- The pre-school room and adjoining sanitary facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up to date cleaning schedules outlining appropriate cleaning methods and the various areas to be cleaned within the playroom and sanitary accommodation were available.
- Staff members were observed cleaning play areas and frequently touched surfaces after children's use and prior to snack time.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels children were observed to wash their hands prior to eating and after toileting. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks. Handwashing was supervised by the adults to ensure all hands were cleaned effectively.

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- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- The care room and sanitary accommodation was adequately ventilated by way of openable windows or mechanical ventilation in cases where no window was available

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with the staff members, they were knowledgeable about the service medication policy. Medication consent forms were in place and administration record templates were available if the service required them.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

During the inspection of the outdoor play area, the mud kitchen structure was observed to have deteriorated, with exposed sharp nails posing a potential risk of injury to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

A carpenter has been contracted to remove the deteriorated mud kitchen. The carpenter will create a new mud kitchen.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of mud kitchen removed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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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 service demonstrated that all children are checked in on arrival and checked out on departure. A record of these times is maintained in the service.
- (3) (a) (b) On the day of the inspection, the staff authorised entry of the inspector and recorded this visit in the visitors' book. The registered provider confirmed that all visitors and contractors to the premises must be approved by the staff before entry.
- (4) The register provider was aware that a record in writing referred to (3) (b) needs to be retained for a period of one year.

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.*

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Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

A first aid bag is fully stocked with adequate first aid resources. This bag was in the care room and was easily accessible if required throughout the day.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not ensure that a person trained in first aid for children was, always, immediately available to the children attending the service. From 9:20 to 9:55, no staff member trained in first aid responder training was available on site until the register provider arrived at the service. It is acknowledged that a staff member did have recently expired basic first aid.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A Staff member has enrolled and completed a FAR Course. An up-to-date Cert will be displayed, and the service will ensure that going forward that a person with FAR is always on site.

Supporting documentation submitted

FAR cert submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed.

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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

Adequate supervision by sight and sound was maintained throughout the inspection. The staff members were effectively positioned across indoor and outdoor environments to ensure children remained within view, with increased vigilance noted during higher-risk activities such as outdoor play. Active oversight was observed during lunch and transitions, with the environment arranged to minimize blind spots. During toileting, supervision was maintained through verbal check-ins and assistance given if needed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated adequate insurance with a certificate for 22 preschool children in a sessional service up until the 27 March 2027.