

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025DL001
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Name of Service:	Naíonra Ghaoth Beara
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Address of Service:	Suíomh Scoil Bhríde, Leitir Mhic an Bhaired, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 R962
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ray Mac Pháidín
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	6	PM	6
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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
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

Naoinra Ghaoth Beara is a registered preschool service that operates from a local primary school. It is located in the rural village of Leitir Mhic an Bhaird, Donegal. The service provides part time and sessional preschool care through the Irish language. The service is registered for children aged 2-6 years. The service operates Monday to Friday between the hours of 9:00am and 2:00pm. The service consists of one large preschool room, adjoining toilets and an office space. There is access to a large outdoor space to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

Three staff members are employed to work in the service, with a fourth staff on call for relief work. The registered provider does not work in the service daily. There is a named person in charge and a named deputy person in charge.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child. This inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19.

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 -

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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 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*

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(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)

The service has a designated person in charge and a named person who can deputise as required.

(b)

On the day of inspection, the person in charge was on site for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was 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)

On the day of the inspection, the person in charge confirmed that there were 4 staff members who worked in the service. Recruitment files in respect of the 4 staff members were reviewed, and the following information was available:

(a)

Five references from past employers, in particular the most recent past employer was on file for the three staff members.

(b)

Three references from other sources, in the absence of a past employers, was on file for two staff members.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures was on file for all four staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required for any staff members, as they had not resided outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.

(4)

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Documentary evidence on file to demonstrate that 4 staff members had obtained a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(1)

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

(2)

The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed in the service on this day:

- Preschool room: 2 Adults cared for 6 children from ages 3 years to 5 years of age. In the afternoon, the adult child ratios were as follows: Preschool room: 2 Adults cared for 6 children from ages 3 years to 5 years of age.

(8) (a)

A review of the staff ratio demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that two adults were always present on the premises.

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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

The following measures were observed to ensure that each child's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

Basic needs

Children's toilets were located directly off the playroom for easy access. Children were supervised by staff while using toilets and hand washing. Staff were observed to line up children for hand washing before mealtime and on return from outdoor play in the preschool room.

Lunch time in the service was observed and healthy lunches comprising of sandwiches, crackers and cheese, yogurts and fruit. There was a fridge in the service to store children's lunches which were brought in from home. Lunch time was social with children sitting at low level tables with the staff and engaging in friendly conversation. Staff helped children opening yogurt's and helped some children opening lunch boxes.

Children were observed to avail of outdoor play during the inspection in the morning. Children were encouraged to do as much as they could for themselves and the staff made it a fun task, singing with the children.

Rest areas were provided in the service. Low level soft couches and floor mats were provided.

Supporting relationships around children.

The service was delivered predominantly In the Irish language. There was strong evidence of embracing the Irish culture with educational art works around the service. One wall was dedicated to the history of Ireland.

The atmosphere in the playroom was calm, relaxed, and fun. Children were observed to move to interest areas for play which was child led with staff helping and participating in activities as required. Staff in the service were observed to sit at the children's level and to be both caring and kind as children moved to their chosen areas of interest in the room. A wall with pictures of family members was used in support a sense of home and belonging. A "wellbeing wall" with pictures of children with happy, sad, tired, ill, surprised, tired, hungry, and angry faces was used to promote conversation and an understanding of feelings and emotions. Painted pictures of plants in a plant pot were used in the playroom to indicate children's names and their birthdays, signalling growth. The

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service featured a notice board to showcase the children's artwork. To facilitate communication between home and the service, an in-person handover is done with parents as the service currently has the capacity to do so. Traditional learning journals and scrapbooks to share updates on children's development, progress and care was also in place. Each child had a key worker in the service. Staff actively participated in both indoor and outdoor play, responding promptly to the needs of individual children. Observations were meaningful staff-child engagement, and the staff were seen working well with the children throughout the inspection in each room.

Physical and material environment

On the day of inspection, the playroom was found to be clean, brightly decorated, and maintained to a high standard. There was a strong emphasis on education through art. Calendars, numbers, words and seasons in the Irish language was displayed throughout the preschool room. The service was furnished with age-appropriate tables and low-level chairs, providing suitable spaces for both tabletop activities and break times. The playroom was well-resourced, featuring a variety of materials designed to support multiple developmental areas. This included imaginative and sensory play. There was defined interest areas such as "home corners" which were equipped with play cookers, utensils, food items, and dolls. Construction and problem-solving materials were readily available. This included blocks of assorted sizes and textures, puzzles, games, and flashcards to facilitate cognitive development. Magnetic shapes were also provided and were observed to be a popular choice among the children. To support creative and messy play, specific zones were dedicated to hands-on exploration and artistic expression. These areas were well-stocked with arts and crafts materials, including paint, paper, scissors, and various shapes and colours. Sand and water stands were provided to facilitate sensory and messy play. For imaginative and physical development, the room featured small animal figures, wheeled toys, and connecting sets. To promote independence, all equipment was stored on low-level open shelving or in floor-level containers, allowing children to select materials freely. A feature of the room was a butterfly farm; this was used to educate the children through nature. The children proudly logged the growth of a butterfly in different stages of development before releasing them into nature.

The outdoor play area featured a concrete all-weather surface and was securely enclosed by a combination of concrete walls and high-level timber secured gates either side to ensure a safe environment. Children were observed engaging in various outdoor activities, including using the sandbox, push bikes, scooters and ride on tractor and trailers promoting gross motor skills. A reserve stock of toys and equipment was maintained in a dedicated storage shed, ensuring a variety of play options remained available.