

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC162
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Name of Service:	Gate Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Eastgate Hall, Little Island, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T45 XR67
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rebecca Wall & Therese Wall
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	84	PM	82
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440.
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast & S O'Brien
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Gate Childcare Ltd is a privately owned childcare facility, that is registered to provide sessional, part time and full day care, for children aged 0 to 6 years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is facilitated over 38 weeks annually. The service is open throughout the year, excluding Christmas and public holidays. Daily hours of operation are from 7.45am to 6.00pm.

This early years service is provided from the ground floor of a two-storey building, which is located in an urban area of Little Island in Co Cork. Within the purpose-built premises, there are four early years care rooms available, namely the Wobbler room, Toddler room, Montessori room and the Pre-school room. The premises also includes two designated sleep rooms, a reception area, an office, a staff canteen, a kitchen, child and adult sanitary facilities and storage areas. An enclosed outdoor play space is accessible at the rear of the building.

Staffing

The early years service employs 23 adults. This includes one adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme, one contractor and the person in charge, who is available to provide cover as needed, in the care rooms.

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 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.

Additional Information

A referral to the Better Start Quality Development programme was made by the Early Years Inspectorate on 16 April 2025, with the permission of the person in charge.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, deputy, 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.

(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) A designated person in charge was appointed to the early years setting, along with a deputy, who could deputise as required.
- (2) It was established that 5 adults had commenced working at the childcare facility, in the period since the previous inspection on 28 May 2024. Recruitments records in respect of these adults were therefore reviewed.
- (a) There were 10 written and validated past employer references on file, in respect of the 5 adults.
- (b) None of the references were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) There was documentary evidence on file to demonstrate that four of the staff members held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education. The fifth adult held a Letter of Qualification Recognition.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) It was acknowledged that the deputy was working at the service when the inspection commenced and that the person in charge was available to facilitate most of the inspection thereafter. However, review of the staff roster indicated that there were times during the service's operational hours when neither the person in charge nor the deputy were present. For example:
- On 8 April 2025, the person in charge and the named deputy were not on the premises between 7.45am and 8.30am.
 - On 10 April 2025, the person in charge and the named deputy were not on the premises between 5.30pm and 6.00pm.

During discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that the other deputy was not currently working at the service.

- (2)
- (d) While there was evidence that police vetting had been obtained for three of the adults, additional required police vetting was unavailable for one of these adults. This staff member had lived in another jurisdiction for longer than six consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)
- (b) In her written reply, the person in charge stated that a third named deputy has been appointed. As there is now one named person in charge and three named deputies, this will ensure that at least one person in charge is on the premises during opening hours. This is also reflected on the staff roster.
- (2)
- (d) This member of staff has since returned to work abroad. As a preventive measure, it will be ensured that police clearance is in place for all staff who have worked or lived in another jurisdiction for a period of six consecutive months, or more and that police clearance is in place to correspond with all information on the curricula vitae of future staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)(b) A copy of the current staff roster.
- (2)(d) The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the statements and evidence provided by the person in charge, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(8)
(a) According to the staff roster, the service was operated with at least two adults present at all times. A minimum of two adults were also on duty throughout the inspection process.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) It was acknowledged that the required adult to child ratios were ensured across the four care rooms throughout the morning of the inspection. However, during part of the afternoon, the minimum ratio of adults to children was not met in the Pre-school and Montessori rooms. At 1.25pm, 23 children aged 3 to 4 years, from the Pre-school room were playing outdoors, with 2 adults present. At 1.28pm, it was noted that 2 adults were available to the 17 children from the Montessori room, who were also in the outdoor area. These children were aged four to five years. A fifth adult was required to be available during this period.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply outlined that staff have been reminded that breaks must be timed, in order to ensure that ratios are correct at all times. Room leaders will ensure that staff breaks are taken in a timely manner and that ratios are maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the staff roster.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the person in charge are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements.

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

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- Meal and snack breaks were facilitated for the children at regular intervals. The person in charge informed the inspectors that breakfast was accommodated between 8.00am and 9.00am. The mid-morning snack was observed at 10.30am in the Pre-school room, followed by the hot lunch meal at 12.20pm in the Wobbler room. The deputy also stated that an afternoon snack was usually provided at 3.00pm.
- In the Pre-school room, it was observed that sufficient time was allocated for the children to enjoy their food and chat with their peers. The younger children in the Wobbler room were assisted with feeding, or were encouraged to feed themselves, according to their stage of development.
- Drinking water was available to the children if they required additional fluids between meal and snack breaks. This included while the children played outdoors.
- The children in the Wobbler and Toddler room had their nappies changed regularly. When using the toilet facilities, the older children were observed to be appropriately supported by the adults, through supervision, verbal prompts and reminders.
- Cosy areas were accessible within the care rooms, which supported the children's need to relax and opt out of scheduled activities, as necessary.
- The younger children in the Wobbler room were noted to sleep at various times throughout the day, as required. All children who attended the Toddler room availed of a scheduled rest period in the afternoon.

- Within the care rooms, adequate space was available to accommodate the children's play and exploration. Outdoor activities were also included as part of the daily routine, for all of the children.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The use of a digital application was incorporated to communicate with parents. This included a messaging feature and allowed parents to receive information regarding the children's activities of daily living, developmental observations and photographs. In addition, informal daily discussion, phone calls and written notices, were used to share relevant information.
- Throughout the inspection, staff members interacted with children in a positive, patient and caring manner. For example, the younger children were supported to use the outdoor equipment and were regularly acknowledged for their participation. Reassurance and sensitivity were demonstrated during routine care practices, such as nappy changing and toileting, which were managed in consideration for the children's individual needs.
- In the Toddler room, family pictures were displayed, which promoted each child's sense of identity and belonging.
- Staff in the Toddler room were aware of the importance of working in partnership with parents and guardians, to support the learning and development of the children. For example, the staff outlined the importance of communicating with parents and guardians while children were toilet training.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

In the Wobbler room, it was observed that six of the children were required to wait to have their lunch meal, until one of the high chairs, or a seat at the table, became available. This was confirmed during discussion with staff. It was noted that while waiting, two of these children approached the table where some of the other children were eating and one child attempted to eat another child's food. It was acknowledged that this was sensitively managed by a staff member, who gently led the children away from the table and redirected them towards free play. However, having to wait for others to finish eating before being accommodated, did not meet the needs of these children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply outlined that as part of the quality development programme, it was recommended to the service that free play, or an organised activity, could be encouraged for a small group of children during mealtime.

This is to promote a slow paced, relaxed mealtime, while also encouraging self-feeding and independence. Each child in the Wobbler room has a dedicated key worker, to ensure that the needs of all the children are always met. In the event of any child displaying signs of hunger, additional tables and seating are readily available to accommodate feeding all of the children simultaneously.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the statement from the person in charge, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met.

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:

- Cupboards at child height had been secured, which reduced the risk of children coming into contact with harmful items.
- Cables and flexes were inaccessible to children.
- Visibility strips were provided on glass panel doors at child height, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a collision injury.
- Televisions were either wall mounted or stored on high-level shelving.
- Blind cords in the Toddler room were appropriately secured.
- Toys and equipment in the Toddler room were observed to be in good condition.

Infection control:

- Handwashing was noted to be carried out in the Pre-school room before snack time and after children had used the toilet facility. Children from the Wobbler room had their hands washed after having their nappies changed. The effectiveness of this practice was supported through adult supervision and the availability of warm running water, liquid soap, single use disposable paper towels and foot pedal operated bins.
- While carrying out nappy changing, staff members were noted to wear single use aprons and gloves, which were removed in between nappy changing procedures.

- A storage container, with individual compartments was used for the children’s soothers in the Wobbler room. A sterilising procedure was also observed to be in place.
- In the Pre-school room, it was noted that children’s perishable foods were refrigerated prior to the mid-morning snack.
- Wall hooks and shelving units were used to store the children’s coats, bags and spare clothing.
- Open windows in the care rooms provided a supply of fresh air throughout the day.

Safe sleep:

- Staff members used a digital application and hand written records to record the children’s breathing, colour and position, while they slept. The deputy confirmed that these checks were undertaken at 10-minute intervals.
- The air temperature in sleep room 1 fell within the required range of 18°C to 22°C, while in use. A temperature reading of 20.9°C was recorded.
- Children in the Toddler room were observed sleeping and resting on age-appropriate, low-level mattresses. Staff supervised the children, while carrying out 10-minute interval sleep checks and recorded these checks on the digital application.

Fire safety:

- The service’s fire exit doors were observed to be free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. While it was noted that most of the medication held at the service was kept out of the children’s reach, safe storage of some medication was not ensured, which increased the risk of a child accidentally ingesting this medication. In the Pre-school room, an inhaler was observed in a child’s bag, which was stored on a low-level shelf in the care room.
2. At 10.40am in the shared sanitary facility, the water temperatures ranged between 46.4°C and 49.3°C. Water temperatures exceeding 43°C poses a risk of scalding to children. It is acknowledged that when the inspector assessed the water temperatures at 1.25pm, the temperatures ranged between 39.2°C and 40.6°C.
3. In the outdoor area, it was noted that toys and equipment were placed on top of a storage unit. As it was observed that children in the Toddler room could reach these toys and equipment, there was a risk that the equipment could be pulled down by and fall on top of a child and cause injury.

Infection control:

4. Three of the cots in sleep room 2 were not fitted with waterproof mattresses, or waterproof mattress protectors, as required to reduce the risk of cross infection.
5. In the nappy changing area adjoining the Toddler room, the inspector observed that two children did not wash their hands after nappy changing. This posed a risk of cross infection to the children and staff in the care room.
6. In the shared sanitary facility, a potty used for toilet training was not cleaned after use. This posed a risk of cross infection to the children and staff.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. Staff will ensure that all medication is removed from the child's bag, upon arrival at the service. The child's parents have supplied a spare inhaler, which will be stored securely, to prevent this oversight reoccurring.
2. The thermostat has been adjusted. Water temperatures are checked and recorded twice daily, in order to ensure that water temperatures do not exceed 43°C.
3. The toys and equipment have been removed. All staff have been advised not to store equipment at a height that is accessible to children, in order to prevent any injuries from occurring.

Infection control:

4. All cot mattresses are now fitted with waterproof covers. As a preventive measure, additional waterproof covers have been purchased, to ensure that there are sufficient covers available.
5. Staff in the Toddler room have been reminded of the importance of hand hygiene in the prevention of cross infection. These staff members have reviewed the service's hand hygiene policy and also have completed a hand hygiene programme.
6. Staff have been reminded that toilet training and the use of potties require a high level of cleanliness. Each potty will be disinfected after every use.

Supporting documentation submitted:

The statements from the person in charge are accepted as evidence in relation to points 1, 3, 5 and 6. A record of the water temperatures logged since the inspection, was submitted in relation to point 2. A receipt for the purchase of the mattress protectors was received in relation to point 4.

Summary Comment

The written response and partial evidence submitted by the person in charge are accepted in meeting the requirements of Regulation 23.

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) Records of fire drills that had taken place were reviewed and clearly demonstrated the frequency of the fire drills and the number of children and staff present at each fire drill. Records assessed outlined that a fire drill had taken place on 28 March 2025.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance records of firefighting equipment at the premises were reviewed and a service was carried out in February 2025.
The number, type and maintenance records of smoke alarms at the premises were reviewed and a service was carried out on 4 November 2024.
 - (4) The fire evacuation procedure for the service was displayed in all of the care rooms and hallways in the service.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

- (b)
- The main entrance door was found to have been appropriately secured prior to the inspectors' unannounced arrival and was maintained secure when not in use. A buzzer entry system was in place for visitors. This minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the service. The door release button on the interior was installed at a high-level, which reduced the risk of a child exiting unsupervised.
 - Care rooms doors were fitted with high-level door handles, which prevented children from gaining unsupervised access to other areas within the setting.
 - The outdoor area was appropriately secured, which prevented a child from exiting unsupervised and also prevented unauthorised access to the service.
 - An outdoor waste storage area was inaccessible to the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. During the inspection, a plastic slide and a playhouse were observed to have broken edges and corners. This posed a safety risk to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In her written reply, the person in charge stated that the plastic slide and playhouse have been removed. A monthly risk assessment of the outdoor area will be undertaken, and staff are required to report and remove where possible, any damaged toys or equipment.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the person in charge is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective action stated by the person in charge has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 29.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(2) In each of the four care rooms, adequate clear floor space was available to accommodate the numbers and age ranges of children in attendance, on the day of the inspection.