

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE072
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Name of Service:	Lifford Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	The Green, Lifford, Ennis, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 AK26
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Touhy
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	21/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM	43
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy
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

Lifford Childcare Centre is a privately owned, purpose built, two storey building, located at the entrance to a residential estate in Ennis, County Clare. The service provides full day, part-time and sessional care for pre-school children ranging in age from one to six years. The programme of care operates from 07:30 to 18:00 Monday to Friday.

A programme of care and learning was facilitated in three care rooms. The Bunnies room (age range one-two years) was located on the ground floor. The Tiger room (age range three-five years) and the Penguin (age range three-four years) are located on the first floor. An enclosed, covered outdoor play area is attached to the side and rear of the service.

Staffing

On the 21 April 2026, the registered provider and twelve adults were present. A student was present on work placement. The registered provider and owner of the service provided an administrative role in the service.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

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

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

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

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*

(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 registered provider was the person in charge, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and the deputy were available during the inspection.

(2)

Fifteen files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

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- (a)
Twenty-one written and validated references from past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.
- (b)
Seven written and validated references from a source other than a past employer in respect of adults working in the service were available.
- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for fifteen adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d)
International police vetting with evidence of translation was available in respect of two adults working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.
- (4)
The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
(a)(b)
Two references with evidence of validation were not available onsite in respect of one adult.
- (d)
International police vetting with evidence of translation was not available onsite in respect of one adult present in the service who had lived in two countries for a period longer than six months as an adult. It is acknowledged the registered provider ensured that the adult does not have access to children until the police vetting certificates are received and assessed.
- (3)
The vetting procedure outlined in paragraph (2) was not carried out prior to an adult commencing in the service. An adult was allowed access to and contact with children attending the pre-school service. This posed a potential risk to the safety of children attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

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Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

Validated References are now available for all employees. The service has implemented the Staff Induction and Staff Validation books. The service has updated the recruitment policy. All students and staff have to have validated references on file before commencing in the service.

(d)

The adult in question will no longer attend their work experience in the service until such time as Police Clearance has been obtained. Once Police Clearance has been obtained and assessed by the registered provider, a copy of the documentation will be forwarded to TUSLA.

Going forward police clearance will be sought for students on work placements. The service's student placement policy has now been updated to ensure that all Police Clearance, Garda Clearance and Reference Validations are submitted, assessed and validated before a student can commence their placement.

(3)

The service's student placement policy has now been updated to ensure that all Police Clearance, Garda Clearance and Reference Validations are submitted, assessed and validated before a student can commence their placement. The service has updated our student placement Policy to ensure that all student files are completed before the student begins their placement.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the registered providers corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence the area of non-compliance under Regulation 9(2)(a) (b) and (3) are addressed.

The non-compliance remains outstanding under Regulation 9(2)(d). Evidence of an application for International Police Vetting for one adult was reviewed. However, a copy of the International Police vetting certificate has not been submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate to date. The registered provider is required to review and assess the police clearance certificate upon receipt and furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate.

The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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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)
During the inspection, an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.
- (2)
On the 21 April 2026, the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Ten adults cared for the forty-three pre-school children attending in the morning and twelve adults cared for the forty-three pre-school children attending in the afternoon.
- (8)(a)
The staff roster demonstrated that more than two adults were available in the childcare facility at all times.

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.

Compliance Information

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(1)(a)

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

The children's learning, development, and well-being was supported by the adults. The adults in the care rooms interacted with the children in a kind and caring manner. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions with the children. The adults responded promptly to the children's cues for assistance and comfort, conversed at their level and listened attentively during conversations. The adults demonstrated an understanding of the children's individual preferences and capabilities. The transitions in the changes of activities and environments in each room were facilitated with ease. The adults notified the children in advance of any change in the programme of activities. The children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environment throughout the day on a rostered basis. The children initiated open ended child-led play-based activities.

The older children were encouraged to be independent while caring for their personal belongings, using the toilet, participation in tasks and tidy up time. The children's cues for sleep were responded to in a prompt and calm manner during the designated sleep period. The children engaged in open ended creative, pretend and sensory play and dance. Speech sounds and language development was promoted by the adults through repetition, songs and rhymes. The younger children were encouraged to feed themselves and were promoted to be independent.

Individual learning journals were available for the children demonstrating the children's progress and creative work. The adults discuss the children's day and observations with the parent/guardians during drop off and collection times. An informal communication approach was observed during interactions with parent/guardians.

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:

- A key coded, bell operated, and surveillance camera system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility.
- The outdoor play areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within.

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- The children's arrival and departure times were recorded in record books.
- Medication and cleaning agents were stored in a secured area out of reach of the children.
- The highchairs were maintained in adequate condition with fitted safety harnesses in the baby room.
- A double height handrail was provided on the stairs.
- A completed risk assessment was available demonstrating measures taken by service to reduce risk.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Completed cleaning schedules were in place throughout the premises.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins. Photographic illustrations of hand hygiene techniques were displayed over the wash hand basins to prompt children to wash their hands.
- Baby milk formula bottles were reconstituted and placed in the service's refrigerators upon the children's arrival in accordance with the current Food Safety Authority Guidance Note.
- Handwashing was encouraged and supervised by the adults. The children's hands were washed at regular intervals.
- The nappy changing procedures observed were completed in accordance with the service's policy.
- The children's personal belongings were stored in individually labelled containers.
- The cot mattresses in the standard sized cots had waterproof, washable protective covers.

Safe Sleep:

- The adults demonstrated a good knowledge of the service's safe sleep policy.
- Children were placed to sleep in individual standard cots and low-level beds.
- A thermometer was available in the sleep room and the care rooms where children were placed to sleep for use by the adults to measure and monitor the room temperatures. The room temperatures were maintained between the required temperature of 18-22°Celsius.
- The adults recorded the sleeping children's observations every ten minutes during sleep periods on a written record.
- The safe sleep guidance procedure was displayed in the Sleep room.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exits and routes were clear from obstruction throughout the service.
- Written records of completed monthly fire drills were available.
- A fire assembly point and fire exit signage were readily identifiable on the premises.

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Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for fifteen adults employed by the service. However, three vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice. It is acknowledged the registered provider applied for up-to-date garda vetting disclosures in respect of the three adults during the inspection.

The corrective and preventive actions provided by the registered provider following inspection 22 July 2025 were not implemented.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Updated Garda vetting disclosures were applied for the staff members whose Garda vetting had expired. Once the Garda vetting has been received and assessed the Garda vetting disclosure will be forwarded to the inspectorate. The recruitment policy has been updated to reflect this Garda Vetting procedure.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence.

Summary Comment

Evidence of the application status for three adult's Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed. However, a copy of the three Garda vetting disclosures has not been submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate to date. The registered provider is required to review and assess the garda vetting disclosures upon receipt and furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate.

The non-compliance in relation to Regulation 23 General Safety remains outstanding. The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.