

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:	22/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	31
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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:	Á. McCarthy & J. Hayes
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	Not applicable
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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. A programme of care is facilitated on a full day, part-time and sessional basis for 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 is facilitated in three care rooms. The Bunnies room (age range one-two years) is 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 22 July 2025, the registered provider and nine adults were present. The registered provider and owner of the childcare facility provides an administrative role in the childcare facility.

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 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) 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

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

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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)

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)

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

(a)

Twenty-four written and validated references from past employers in respect of the adults working in the service were available.

(b)

Four 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 fourteen 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 was available in respect of two adults working in the service who had lived in another State for a period longer than six months.

(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.

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 22 July 2025, the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Nine adults cared for the thirty children attending in the morning and for thirty-one children 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

- (1)(a)
The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities and interactions having regard to the age and developmental level of the children. Three care rooms were in operation during the inspection.

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults treated the children in a kind and caring manner. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions with the children. The adults conversed with the children in a sensitive and respectful manner. The adults used soft tones of voice and conversed with the children at their level and listened attentively during conversations. The adults responded promptly to the children's cues for assistance, to be held and to be hugged. A key person approach was adopted in each care room. The adults demonstrated an understanding of the children's individual preferences, interests 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. Visual aids were used throughout the service to support children to become familiar with the daily routines and schedules.

The children’s nappies were changed on an individual need’s basis, and the adults carried out these procedures in a sensitive manner. The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their age and level of development. A change of clothes was available for each child if required. 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 adults promoted the children to manage their own personal care and nasal care appropriate to their age and level of development. The children’s cues for sleep were responded to in a prompt and calm manner, and the children who did not require a sleep joined the older children in the outdoor area for play based activities. Individually designed areas were provided for the children in the indoor area with soft furnishings and reading materials and used by the children periodically to rest and relax. Mealtime was observed to be a relaxed and sociable period whereby the children and adults conversed amicably. The babies were encouraged to feed themselves and were promoted to be independent. Suitable age-appropriate crockery and feeding utensils were provided during mealtime. The children’s parents provided the food, and water was freely available and accessible at all times.

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.
- The children’s arrival and departure times were recorded in record books.
- A record book was available to record unauthorised adults.
- 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.

Infection Control:

- The childcare facility was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Cleaning schedules were in place throughout the premises.
- The sanitary facility was 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.
- Handwashing was encouraged and supervised by the adults.
- 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 had waterproof, washable protective covers.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not administered during the inspection.
- The registered provider and adults working in the service demonstrated an understanding of the administration of medication policy.
- Documentation was available for the adults to use should medication be administered in the service.

Safe Sleep:

- The adults demonstrated a good knowledge of the service's safe sleep policy.
- Children were placed to sleep in their individual standard cots and low-level beds.
- A thermometer was available in the sleep room and care where children were placed to sleep for 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.

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 was readily identifiable and identified by the adults working in the service.

Outing:

- The registered provider stated that only one outing was undertaken this year with the children. A risk assessment and an outings checklist are completed for every outing.
- The registered provider demonstrated an awareness of the service's outings policy and procedure.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for three adults employed by the service. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All three Garda vetting clearances have been applied for on 23/7/25. A copy of the vetting applications was issued to the inspectorate. Once received and assessed the service will forward a copy to the inspectorate. A new Garda vetting template to prompt the service to update garda vetting has been developed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- A copy of the service's new Garda vetting template.
- A copy of the Garda vetting applications.

Summary Comment

Based on the registered providers response and supporting documentation the area of non-compliance under Regulation 23 General Safety is now resolved.

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)

Three adults had a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and the staff roster indicated that an adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available in the service at all times.

(2)(a)

Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored in accessible and conspicuous areas in each care room in the service and in the kitchen.

(b)

The first aid boxes were available in the service for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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 fire fighting 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 were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 09 June 2025.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment took place on the November 2025 and the smoke alarm system took place on the February 2025.

(4)

Fire action notices were displayed demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for fifty-three pre-school children. The insurance policy for the sessional service is valid until the 27 March 2026.