

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW002		
Name of Service:	Absolute Beginners Crèche		
Address of Service:	Rathsillan Estate, Carlow Road, Tullow, Co. Carlow		
Eircode:	R93 PE00		
Name of Registered Provider:	Valerie Coulahan		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	20/08/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM 24
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Wexford.		
Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry		
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).			
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable		

Description of service

This full-day care service is located in a housing estate just outside Tullow, in County Carlow. A service is provided to children aged from 6 months to 6 years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 18:15. The service is operated from a detached single-story bungalow. The service has four preschool rooms, three designated sleep rooms, toilets and nappy changing facilities, an onsite kitchen, and four outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the property.

Staffing

There are 11 staff employed in the service including the registered provider and co-owner who also work directly with the children. All staff working directly with the preschool children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4),

Regulation 10 Policies and Procedures,

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),

Regulation 15 Record of preschool child,

Regulation 17 Information for parents,
Regulation 20 Facilities for rest and play,
Regulation 22 Food and Drink,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,
Regulation 25 First aid (1) (2) (a) (b),
Regulation 26 Fire Safety (1) (a) (b) (4).
Regulation 28 Insurance.
Regulation 29 Premises,

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

An immediate action notice was issued on the 20 August 2025 regarding a non-compliance identified under Regulation 23, Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child. An adequate response was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate on the 22 August 2025 to demonstrate the actions taken to correct the non-compliance.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The manager was the designated person on the day of the inspection. There was a designated deputy also employed in the service. The registered provider and co-owner were also present to facilitate the inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Following a discussion with the manager and on review of documentation, it was established that there were 11 staff employed in the service including the registered provider and co-owner. All staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection. All required written and validated references were available on file in the service.

- (c)
There was evidence of Garda vetting available on file in the service for all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all staff.
- (d)
Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4)
All staff who were working directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.
- (7)
The registered provider had ensured that all employees were appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information and training to carry out their duties in the service. Staff who spoke to the inspector said they had regular staff meetings where they were given information in relation to any issues in the service. Staff had signed a document to state they had read the policies in place in the service.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

There were written policies, procedures, and statements, as specified in Schedule 5, available for the service. The policies on the healthy eating policy and the safe sleep policy were reviewed on this inspection and were found to be complete and specific to the setting.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
There was an adequate number of staff working with the children during the day of inspection.
- (2)
On the morning of inspection there were 27 children aged from 6 months to 6 years in the care of 7 staff. In the afternoon there were 24 children aged from 6 months to 6 years of age in the care of 7 staff. The manager was in the service for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider and co-owner arrived later on the day of the inspection and were also available to assist across the rooms and assist the inspection. The minimum ratio of adults to children was always maintained for the duration of the inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*

- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

A sample of 12 children's enrolment forms completed by the parents were reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

There was information for parents on the operation of the service. This information was available in a hard copy for parents. The copy was reviewed by the inspector. The service provided parents with information as required under regulation 17. The information booklet provided for parents contained an outline of the curriculum, the hours of operation, contact details and the facilities available within the service. There was also information included on the day to day running of the service and how to contact the registered provider.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
 - (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider had ensured there were adequate and suitable facilities for children to play indoors and outdoors in the service. The baby room was observed to be well equipped with toys and materials suitable for the young babies in the room. There were bricks, wind-up toys and rattlers. There was a large, soft circular ball pool where babies could sit supported when playing. There was adequate space for the children to crawl, walk and roll in the room. The ground covering was a mixture of carpet, and linoleum, which could be easily cleaned.

In the toddler's room also called the wildflower room children were observed to enjoy the books which had been provided for them. The inspector noted the room had been set up with care and attention to the ages and stages of the children in attendance. There was original artwork displayed of handprints made by the children. The children were observed enjoying free play. There was a selection of dolls, buggies and small cots for dolls. To the rear of the service on the left-hand side there was a large play area which had a grass covering. There were tyres, a tree house and a mud kitchen for children to play with. There was a recently constructed outdoor classroom which was open on one side. This classroom had seats and tables and play equipment which the children could access when they were outside.

To the rear of the service there was a cement area accessed directly from the junior preschool room and the preschool room. This area had a sensory wall with colanders and metal containers nailed to a wooden palette for children to play with.

The children in the toddler /wildflower room had direct access to their own play area also situated to the rear of the service. This area had a large yellow wooden bus and a small house with a slide. The baby room had access to their own designated play area directly outside the room. There was also a large enclosed and grassed area available to the children situated to the right of the service.

(b)

There were suitable rest facilities provided in all the rooms for children to rest in during the day. There were three sleep rooms. There were cot beds available for older children to sleep on. The cots provided for the children in the baby room were suitable and supplied with safety-approved mattresses.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy in place in the service. All the meals and snacks were prepared and served from the kitchen in the service. There was a 3-week rotating menu in operation in the service which listed the snacks and meals on offer to the children. The children enjoyed a freshly cooked dinner chilli con carne with rice and vegetables. The older children enjoyed their dinner in the outdoor classroom (Seomra amach). Babies were served in their highchairs in their room. Babies were encouraged to self-feed and given assistance when required. Water was always available to drink in all the rooms across the service for the children to keep hydrated.

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

The registered provider has taken the following steps to ensure the safety of the children attending the service.

General safety:

Access to the service was gained through the front door which was made of glass. The fire doors were not obstructed. Cleaning agents were stored in areas that were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

The service was observed to be clean on the day of inspection. Cleaning templates were available in the service to document the regular cleaning of the preschool rooms, toilets, and nappy changing areas. Children were observed washing their hands before eating, after using the toilet and after messy play. Staff were observed washing their hands regularly throughout the day. There was a system in place for the regular cleaning of mouthable toys in the baby room.

Administration of Medication:

The service had an administration of medication policy in place in the service. Records of administration of medication were reviewed on the day of inspection. These were in line with best practice and were signed by two staff following the administration of the medication for the child as stated in the policy. Staff who spoke to the inspector were clear in their understanding of the policy that was in place in the service.

Accident and incident

Records of accidents were reviewed. All records reviewed were in line with the service policy and were signed by the parents to confirm they had been made aware of the accident /incident in the service.

Outings

The service does not facilitate outings.

Non-Compliance Information

1.

The temperature in the sleep room attached to the baby room was not maintained between 16°C and 20°C at all times. This measure is required for safe sleep practice in a preschool service for children under 1 years old. There were 2 children under 1 and 3 children aged between 1 and 2 in the room on the day of inspection.

2.

The thermometer on the wall of the sleep room attached to the baby room was not recording the temperature accurately on the day of inspection.

Time	Sleep room attached to baby room temperatures recorded by the inspector	Wall thermometer in the room	Children Sleeping
11:30	24.0°C	22.7°C	One child over one year and one child under one year sleeping
12:20	24.2°C	22.2°C	One child over one year sleeping
12:55	24.3°C	22.3°C	One child over one year sleeping and one child under one sleeping.
14:25	23.4°C	22.4 °C	One child under one year sleeping

An immediate action notice was issued on the 20 August 2025 regarding this non-compliance. An adequate response was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate on the 22 August 2025 to demonstrate the actions taken to correct the non-compliance.

It is acknowledged at 11:30 when the inspector informed staff of the high temperature recorded in the sleep room, they opened the windows and rechecked the air conditioning unit in the sleep room.

3.

Children were put down to sleep still dressed in their day clothes. Children are required to be put down to sleep in loosely fitting clothing to ensure they are cool and comfortable during their nap times.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1.2.

The heating in the sleep room has been adjusted to ensure the temperature remains within the required range of 16–20°C. A new calibrated wall thermometer has been installed. Staff have been instructed to monitor and record the temperature every 10 minutes while the room is in use. A competent professional has been commissioned by

the registered provider to provide recommendations for the installation of suitable air conditioning units to maintain a consistent temperature in the sleep room.

3.
The safe sleep policy has been amended to include that children should be put down to sleep in loose-fitting clothing. This amendment was also shared with parents.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.2.
A photograph of the new calibrated wall thermometer was received by the inspector.
Evidence that a competent professional has been engaged to review the heating system in the service was received by the inspector. This professional will recommend the installation of suitable air conditioning units to ensure the temperature in the sleep room is maintained between 16°C and 20°C always was received by the inspector.

3.
A copy of the amended safe sleep policy to include that children who are sleeping in the service will be dressed in loose fitting clothes was received by the inspector. This policy has also been shared with the parents of the children attending the service.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of the The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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) There was a person trained in a first aid responder course available to the children attending the preschool service. The manager and the deputy manager were both trained in a first aid responder course and were available to cover the roster in the service.
- (2)(a)(b)
- There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position on the premises and was available to the children attending the preschool service.

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)
- There was a record of fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place in the service in July 2025.
- (b) There was a record available on file stating the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm was last serviced in May 2025.
- (4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the main entrance of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was insurance in place to cover the number of children the service was registered to accommodate.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and.

Non-Compliance Information

1.
The metal on the taps in the preschool room was corroded.
2.
The water for hand washing was not thermostatically controlled throughout the service. The water remained cold throughout the day in all the warm water taps in the service. A staff member told the inspector that the water heater in the preschool room was not turned on as it was too hot for the children to use.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1.
The taps have been replaced.
2.
The water heater was reset to ensure thermostatically controlled water is always now available for handwashing in the service. The immersion in the service has been repaired by an electrician. Staff have been reminded to immediately report any issues with water temperature or maintenance requirements to management so that repairs can be carried out promptly.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.
A photograph of the new taps in place was received by the inspector.
2.
A template of the temperatures of the water in the taps recorded in the service was received by the inspector.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.