

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY374				
Name of Service:	Giraffe Childcare Elm Park				
Address of Service:	Elm Park, Merrion Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Co. Dublin				
Eircode:	D04 XP26				
Name of Registered Provider:	Dearbhala Cox Giffin				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time				
Date(s) of Inspection:	15/04/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>55</td> <td>PM</td> <td>59</td> </tr> </table>	AM	55	PM	59
AM	55	PM	59		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate - Tusla Child and Family Agency Brunel Building, Floor 7 Heuston South Quarter Dublin 8, D08 X01F				
Inspection undertaken by:	S Quigley and M Bermingham				
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Giraffe Childcare Elm Park is one of multiple services operated by Giraffe Childcare Ltd. This service is registered to provide full-day and part-time care for 78 children aged 0-6 years. Opening hours are 07:30-18:00. The service operates from a purpose-built premises in an urban style mixed use development. Children are cared for in seven care rooms across two floors. Three rooms are on the ground floor to include Wobbler Safari (1-2 years), Wobbler Cameroon (1 and 2 years), and Toddler Kenya (2 and 3 years). On the first floor the rooms include Wobbler Acacia (11-18 months), Wobbler Baringo (1-2 years), Junior Toddler Serengeti (2-3 years), and Pre-school Madagascar (3-5 years). Additional facilities include two cot rooms on the first floor, and a kitchen and office on the ground floor. There are two outdoor play areas, one in front and one at the rear, each accessible via a care room.

Staffing

There are 27 adults employed with the service. Twenty-one adults were present on the day of inspection to include 16 adults working directly with children, the manager, and 4 ancillary staff working in the kitchen and housekeeping. After the inspection commenced, 2 additional adults arrived in the service. One adult from another Giraffe service worked directly with children and an area manager assisted in facilitating the inspection. Additionally, 2 students on work placement were also present 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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 – Health, welfare and development of child and Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Wobbler Safari, Wobbler Cameroon, Wobbler Baringo, Toddler Kenya, and Junior Toddler Serengeti.

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 area manager, 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
- (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 service had a named person in charge a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The person in charge and/or deputy were rostered to be present on the premises for the duration of the opening hours.
 - (c) A clear management structure was in place as evidenced by observing the operation of the service on the day and through discussion with staff.

(2)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Thirty-one adults were employed or present in the service, of which 18 commenced since the last inspection on 5 March 2026, as confirmed through a discussion with the manager and a review of the roster. Recruitment documentation was reviewed for the 18 newly commenced adults and Garda vetting renewal was reviewed for existing adults. The following vetting documents were found to have been considered:

- (a) Thirty-four written and verified references from past employers.
- (b) Two written and verified references from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Eighteen new Garda vetting disclosures were available. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all adults employed.
- (d) International police vetting certificates for 18 adults who lived outside the state for a period of more than six months as an adult were available.

- (3)
The procedures in 9(2) were carried out prior to the 18 adults commencing in the service.
- (4)
Qualification records were reviewed for 14 new staff members working directly with children, all of which held the required qualification or recognised 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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 16 adults working with 55 children in the morning and with 59 children in the afternoon.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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-

(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 observations demonstrated how appropriate and suitable care practices were in place:

During play and activities adults engaged with children playfully and children appeared to be content and enjoying themselves, for example, during a pretend game outside, colouring and chatting, circle time, and playing with play dough. The adults facilitated children's lead by reading stories of the children's choosing and facilitating children to opt out of the group activity and play something else.

Adults supported children's personal care appropriately, using kind encouraging language and engaging in conversation. For example, noses were cleaned without delay and children who were learning to use the toilet were supported. Nappies were changed regularly and staff confirmed additional changes are completed when needed. Adults verbally noticed and acknowledged individual children's needs and preferences by responding appropriately and offering comfort when children showed signs of upset.

Children's transitions were facilitated through the use of a visual display of the daily routine and the allocation of jobs to children as helpers, which promotes independence. Adults used positive language to encourage children tidy up materials and toys onto low level open shelving. Children helped set the table for dinner. After eating dinner, children were free to move away from the table, firstly having their hands and faces cleaned. One adult read a story to children while another adult helped children prepare for bed.

Children's identity and belonging was fostered through displays of children's and families' photographs, children's preferences and birthdays, and labelled cubbies and coat hooks. Additionally, there were photographs displayed of adults and children in the room engaging in activities together and displays of children's artwork. Staff confirmed that a key carer system was in place which promotes close relationships between staff, children and their families. A digital application was used to facilitate two-way communication with parents about sleep, nappies, food, activities, and exchange of photographs.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Regular meals and snacks were offered to the children throughout the inspection, including a hot dinner. During mealtimes adults supported children by putting on bibs, providing personalised placemats, serving food, and providing help and encouragement when needed. Adults checked in verbally with each child to see how they were doing and children were offered and provided seconds accordingly. Drinking water was provided at morning snack and dinner and was available to children throughout the day.

Staff confirmed that there were set times for sleeping but that sleep is needs led and if a child becomes tired, they will be facilitated to sleep. A conducive sleeping environment was provided with blinds pulled down and soft lighting and music.

Non-Compliance Information

The following observations demonstrated how some appropriate and suitable care practices were not in place:

1. In the cot room adjacent to Acacia, an inappropriate care practice was observed when a child was being supported to settle to sleep. The child was placed in the cot at 12:07 and began moving round from sitting to standing in the cot. The child was not upset. At 12:13 when the child stood, a staff member placed the child back down on the mattress. After a few seconds, the staff member, in a quick movement, took the blanket off the child, picked up the child and placed the child on the floor. The staff member opened the door to the care room and placed the child in the care room, returning to the cot room. This practice had a negative impact on the child who was observed by the inspector to be visibly upset as a result of the quick movement. The child was comforted by the staff member in the care room.

The preventive actions submitted by the registered provider following the last inspection of the service on the 05 March 2025 did not prevent the re-occurrence of non-compliance relating to sleep practices.

2. Children in Wobbler Baringo were not provided with spoons to afford them an opportunity to feed themselves at dinner. The children presented with signs that they were developmentally ready to use a spoon and were observed by the inspector to become frustrated while waiting to be spoon fed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that:

1. On receipt of information of the above anomalies around sleep practices, this was immediately reviewed by the management team. The staff member received guidance and support regarding appropriate settling and sleep practices and the importance of calm respectful and child-centred interactions at all times. All staff were retrained on the service's sleep and rest policy to ensure consistent and appropriate practices are followed throughout the service. Management will continue to monitor sleep and rest

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

practices through regular supervision, observations and staff meetings, and management will be more visible on the floor at sleep times. Ongoing support and refresher training will be provided to ensure all staff follow the sleep and rest policy and maintain a nurturing and respectful environment for children.

- Mealtimes and feeding practices were reviewed with all staff to ensure children are always supported appropriately and safely during meals. Staff were reminded that children must be supervised and assisted in a developmentally appropriate manner at all times. All staff have been retrained on safe feeding and supervision practises, including maintaining close supervision during mealtimes and responding promptly to children's needs management will continue to monitor practices through regular observations supervision and training to ensure the compliance is maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met. The actions outlined will be assessed on the next inspection.

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 following measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children, and provide a safe environment. This was evidenced by observation of practice, a review of the environment and documentation, and through discussion with staff.

General Safety:

- The entrance to the service was appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised.
- The outdoor areas were secured and fully enclosed.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored out of children's reach.

Infection Control:

- The premises, environment, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in a hygienic condition and housekeeping staff were observed cleaning.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Children's bottles containing infant formula were brought in by parents, stored in the fridge, and reheated in a safe manner.
- Children's soothers and mouthing toys were managed appropriately. Both were removed after being in a child's mouth and there was a system in place for washing and sterilising before the soothers and toys are reintroduced to the children. Soothers were stored in individually labelled containers.
- Waste was managed appropriately including the use of pedal bins.
- Nappy changing practices were carried out in line with the services procedures on display.
- Cots, mattresses, and stackable beds were clean, and bed linen was stored appropriately and regularly laundered.

Administration of Medication:

- Prior parental consent was recorded to administer medication in the case of an emergency as detailed on an individual care plan. Staff were familiar with the details of the care plan and the procedure for giving the medication.
- Staff were familiar with the procedures in place for the administration of medication in line with the services policy.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep room temperatures were monitored and maintained within the required ranges.
- Children's outer clothing was removed before sleeping.
- Staff described the physical checks carried out on sleeping children with regard to children's colour, breathing, and position as per safe sleep guidance and the relevant records were updated.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency escape routes and exits were unobstructed and clearly signposted.
- Staff outlined the procedure to evacuate children in the event of a fire and knew the location of the assembly point in line with the services procedures that were on display.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. It is acknowledged that handwashing was facilitated through the provision of liquid soap, water, and paper towels in some of the sampled rooms. However, in the Wobbler Safari room, effective handwashing was not facilitated which posed a risk of cross contamination.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- At 11.37 water was provided in a plastic container from which four children washed their hands in the same water. The water was emptied and refilled and a further group of five children washed their hands in the same water.
- A staff member confirmed that after nappy changing children's hands are wiped with wet cotton wool instead of using soap and warm running water as required.

Safe Sleep:

2. Sleep plans, to include a risk assessment, were not available for five children aged 1-2 years who were sleeping on floor beds in Wobbler Cameroon. Sleep plans are required to ensure that a child's individual needs are met in consultation with parents and that sleep provision is safe and appropriate for the child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that:

Infection Control:

1. The service reviewed infection control and hand-washing procedures immediately with all staff following the inspection. Staff were reminded that effective hand washing must always be carried out using warm running water and liquid soap to reduce the risk of cross contamination. All staff have since been retrained on infection control, hand hygiene and nappy changing procedures to ensure consistent practice across the service. Appropriate hand-washing resources are now monitored regularly throughout the day to ensure there remain fully available in all rooms

Safe Sleep:

2. Individual sleep plans and risk assessments were completed and updated for all children sleeping on floor beds. Sleep arrangements were reviewed with parents to ensure each child's individual needs are safely and appropriately met. All staff have been retrained on the service's safe sleep policy and safe sleep practices, including supervision sleep environments and the completion of individual plans and risk assessments.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The inspector reviewed the actions and evidence submitted and the non-compliance identified under regulation 23 was adequately addressed.