

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK007
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Name of Service:	Bluebells Crèche
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Address of Service:	78/79 Robertshill, Circular Road, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 Y589
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lorraine Knowles
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	30/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Bluebells Creche is a registered full day childcare service which is in the Robertshill residential estate in Kilkenny city. The service provides early a childhood care and education sessional (ECCE) service, part-time and full day childcare services for children aged 1 to 6 years of age from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the calendar year. The service operates from a residential two-storey house comprised of three classrooms, the baby/wobbler room on the ground floor and the toddler and preschool room on the first floor. A dedicated sleep room and kitchen are both also on the ground floor with nappy changing facilities and children's toilet facilities on both floors. There is an outdoor play space located onsite at the back of the premises.

Staffing

There were 10 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider, who also works in the service. All 10 staff members held qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) 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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 15-Record of a Pre-School Child,
Regulation 16(1)- Record in relation to Pre-School Service,
Regulation 19(1)- Health, Welfare and Development of Child,
Regulation 23- Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of Child,
Regulation 24- Checking in and Out and Record of Attendance,
Regulation 25- First Aid,
Regulation 26- Fire Safety Measures

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the three classroom areas.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 has a named designated person in charge, and a named person who can deputise as required.

(b) At all times during the inspection the designated person in charge was onsite with the deputy designated person in charge also present.

(2) Staff files for 10 staff members and 2 students were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each staff member, from either a past employer or from a reputable source. References were available for each of the two students present on placement.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file for each of the 10 staff members including the registered provider and 2 students on placement. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting disclosure certificates were on file for eight staff members employed in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in each of the three preschool classrooms that were in operation during the inspection.
- Baby/Wobbler Room** –There were 2 staff members and 1 student directly caring for 6 children aged 1 to 2 years of age throughout the day of inspection.
- Toddler Room**- There were 2 staff members directly caring for 6 children aged 2 to 3 years throughout the morning of inspection with 3 children present with 1 staff member in the afternoon.
- Pre-School Room**- In the morning there were 14 children aged 4 to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members and 1 student and in the afternoon 11 children remained with 1 staff member and 1 student.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff the inspector was assured that there were always at least two adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

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

- (1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of pre-school children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each child.
- (3) The above records were available on the premises for inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1) On review of documents available on file in the service, the inspector was assured that a record was maintained in writing by the registered provider of the information required in elements (a) to (k).

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-

(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

(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

(1)(a)(b)

Basic care needs of the children.

The inspector observed that in each of the three classrooms, children's individual learning, wellbeing and development were supported. Staff were observed to respond promptly to children supporting them with activities and choices, as well as basic care needs such as feeding, toileting and nappy changing, and individual sleep requirements, according to each child's stage of development.

Each classroom had a designated drinks station, containing individual children's water cups or bottles. Children were often reminded to have a drink of water.

In the baby /wobbler classroom, the staff were observed to ensure that each child's beaker or water bottle were labelled with each child's individual names and that the children were supported in having regular drinks.

The staff informed the inspector that each morning the service provided a selection of wheat or rice-based cereals and fresh warm toast for any children attending the service from opening at 08:00 hours until 09:00 hours.

Children attending the pre-school room bought food for their morning snack from home which they ate at approximately 10:00 hours. The other two classes were provided with snacks by the service. The service displayed the daily menu for parents to see each day on the notice board in the front hall. Morning snack included crackers, peeled apple slices and cheese cubes which the staff prepared appropriately for the age of the children, chatting about the benefits of healthy food. Younger children who were new to finger food were observed closely while eating and supported if assistance was needed.

The main hot meal of the day was served at 12:30 hours and was observed to be a chicken pasta bake with finely diced courgettes, carrots and onions in a homemade tomato sauce. The inspector observed that the meal was enjoyed in all three classrooms with children provided with additional helpings as requested.

The inspector observed throughout the inspection that staff interacted respectfully and positively with the children, listening to the children actively, acknowledging and supporting children's different personalities and

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

abilities. Staff encouraged and supported children in making choices, for example on choosing to go outside to play and in what games and activities to play. This supported the children's identities and sense of belonging in their classes and the service as they confidently showed the inspector their creative work, their classroom learning journals and the variety of activities that were available to them.

Physical Environment

The inspector observed that all three classrooms provided the children with age-appropriate environments to stimulate creative, imaginary and challenging play.

Children in the baby/ wobbler room enjoyed the freedom of movement in the clear space provided exploring the various treasure baskets created by staff of age-appropriate building blocks, sensory toys and activities. The children sat cuddled against staff members on the soft cosy area looking through books and reading stories, while sometimes wandering off to play with items that had caught their attention such as the toy farmhouse or connective and manipulative play materials that they wanted to try. Examples of the children's creative artwork was displayed on the walls for the children to see as well as individual family photos to reinforce the partnership between the childcare service and home. Parents were observed to come into the classroom at collection time joyfully welcomed by their children to admire the children's creations and exchange information on their individual children's activities.

The inspector observed that in all three classrooms children's emergent interests and been observed, documented in "Wow Moments" where the children's ideas were incorporated into activities such as the children's nature walk in the pre-school room to pick flowers and craft creative cases in celebration of the upcoming Easter festival. Classrooms were brightly decorated with "Happy Easter" signage, bunting, Easter chicks, carrots and eggs. Staff were observed to engage children in conversations about Easter and Springtime in general, talking about the arrival of baby animals and frogspawn, growing flowers and working on their individual projects such as "Our Garden" and Individual Children's Springtime". Children learnt new ways of making artistic paint strokes, developing their creative and fine motor skills using cotton buds, sponges and kitchen roll shapes and papier mache.

There was documented evidence of curricular planning to develop children's vocabulary, to help them express their emotions and needs. Plans to do activities to develop their confidence and well-being, increase independence and build relationships and trust to create a happy experience for all the children in the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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:

The main entrance to the service was secured with a call bell system. A reception area was located on the ground floor. Staff were required to answer the call bell system to permit entry to the service, therefore, children could not exit the service unsupervised and visitors to the service could only enter the premises once authorised by the staff.

The play area at the back of the building was secured by a locked high gate at the side of the building and a high cemented block wall. Staff informed and demonstrated to the inspector that a daily risk assessment was carried out prior to children using the outdoor play area.

All cleaning materials and equipment were secured safely in a designated area inaccessible to the children in the service.

Infection Control:

There was an adequate number of toilet and nappy changing facilities provided in the service to meet the needs of the children attending the service.

Each toilet unit had child height handwash basins, supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

The older children were observed to use the toilet and hand-washing facilities on the first floor, independently, while staff supported and assisted the younger children in the toddler room as needed.

Staff were observed to support and prompt the children to wash their hands correctly after using the toilet, after nappy-changing, after messy and outdoor play, and before snack times.

Administration of Medication:

The staff were well informed of the procedures to be followed in administering any type of medication to a child, in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Child centred plans were available for inspection for any child who may require emergency medication in the event of a medical emergency.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The staff demonstrated that they were well informed of any child in their care who had additional medical needs and of any child centred treatment plans that they had been devised in partnership with the child's parents/guardians.

Safe Sleep:

A sleep room with an adequate number of standard cots and stackable beds for children aged over two years were available in the ground floor sleep room. Staff were observed to physically check any sleeping child every ten minutes, in line with the service's safe sleep policy.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place for the safe execution of any planned outings for the pre-school children away from the service. The inspector observed the staff implement the service's outings policy on the day of inspection as they went on a nature walk to gather flowers and foliage for a planned project.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The inspector observed that 2 staff members neglected to wear plastic aprons for nappy changing procedures in line with the service's nappy changing and infection control policy for the service.
2. The two nappy bins in each of the two changing rooms were not pedal operated as required by the Early Years Inspectorate regulatory notice issued in September 2025, to minimise the number of surfaces touched by a staff member after changing a nappy.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted the following corrective and preventive actions.

Infection Control:

1. Following the inspection, all staff have been individually briefed on the mandatory use of a new apron for every nappy change. Written notifications have been issued to reinforce this requirement.

To ensure ongoing compliance, in addition to the above, sign reminders have been posted in all changing rooms, and a full supply of aprons remains available on-site.

2. Following the inspection, I have purchased and placed a pedal operated, lidded bin in each designated nappy room.

I have formally briefed all staff on using the pedal bins to maintain a 'hands-free' disposable process. I have followed this up with a written notification and additional signage in changing rooms.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence to support the corrective and preventive actions taken.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's daily attendance and departure times to and from the service were recorded daily. On review of the attendance records the number of children present in the service correlated with the attendance records maintained by the staff in each of the three classrooms.

(3)(a) The inspector observed that no person other than a child attending the service, a parent/ guardian dropping or collecting a child, an employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without authorisation by the registered provider or an employee.

(b) The inspector observed that a daily record of any visitors to the service was maintained and detailed the name, contact details, purpose of visit and times of entry and exit from the service. The inspector was required to record the details in the record book upon arriving at the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(4) The inspector observed that a visitor record had been maintained for greater than one year prior to the date of inspection.

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

There were four staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, there was at least two staff members with FAR training present. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

There was first aid box located in the main office/ reception area, which was easily accessed by all staff and always available.

The first aid contents were adequate, and records demonstrated that the first aid contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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) The following fire safety records were maintained

(a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 20 February 2026.

(b) A written record was maintained of the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and the smoke alarm system in the service. The last maintenance check of fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in March 2026 and for the fire alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 11 February 2026.

(2) The fire safety records were available and open for inspection by the early years inspector or by a parent / employee on request.

(3) The designated person in charge demonstrated that records were maintained for the five years prior to inspection.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the main entrance hall.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a full day childcare service for up to 31 pre-school children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2026 to the 27 March 2027.