

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK016
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Name of Service:	Clever Cats Childcare
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Address of Service:	7 Blackchurch Square, Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95YP22
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Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Coughlan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	03/09/2025
	04/09/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	37	PM	24
		34		NA

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford
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Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry C Ryan
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Clever Cats Childcare service is situated in the village of Inistioge in county Kilkenny. The service provides full day care, part-time and sessional day care services to preschool children aged from 6 months to 6 years. The service is also registered to provide a school age service. The service is open Monday to Friday, from 07:45 until 18:00. The service is operated from a purpose-built childcare building comprising of four preschool rooms, a baby room, a wobbler room, a toddler room and a preschool room upstairs. There are two outdoor play areas, one to the rear of the service and one to the side which has a sheltered roof to facilitate outdoor play when it is raining.

Staffing

There are nine staff employed in the service including the registered provider who also works directly with the children. There were 8 staff working directly with the preschool children who 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.

The inspection focused on the following regulations.

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

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

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),
Regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child,
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,
Regulation 32 Complaints.

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

The inspection was carried out following information received by the inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The manager was the person in charge on both days of the inspection. There was a person available to deputise when the manager was absent. The registered provider was also in the service on both days and was available to facilitate the inspection. The roster demonstrated there was a person in charge on all days the service was in operation.

(2)(a)(b)

Following a discussion with the manager and on review of documentation, it was established that there were 9 staff employed in the service. All written and validated references were available on file for staff working in the service.

(c)
There was Garda vetting available on file in the service for all staff members. The service demonstrated partial compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for 6 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)
There were qualifications on file for 8 staff working directly with the children. These staff held an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

1.
One staff member who was working directly with the children did not have a valid certificate in place to confirm they held an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1.
The certificate is now in place to confirm the staff member held an award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework. The service will ensure going forward all required certification of qualification will be in place in future in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.
A copy of the certificate of qualification was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

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

The written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place for the service. The policies reviewed on this inspection were the policies on the managing of complaints in the service, the behaviour management policy and the inclusion policy.

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*
- (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 for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)
Day 1
During the morning, there were 37 children being directly cared for by 6 staff.
During the afternoon, there were 24 children being directly cared for by 7 staff.
- Day 2
During the morning, there were 34 children being directly cared for by 7 staff.
The manager and registered provider were also present on the premises, and available to assist across the rooms as needed during the day.

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

The parents of children attending were sent the policies and procedures prior to their children attending the service. The inspector reviewed the information given to them. The service provided parents with information as required under regulation 17. The information provided for parents contained an outline of the child protection policy, the hours of operation, curriculum development policy, contact details and the facilities available within the service. There was also information included on funding schemes available for parents to avail of.

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)

Children were engaged in a variety of appropriate activities during the inspection. The staff in the toddler room were observed playing with the children in the room and reading stories to them before their sleep time. The interactions between staff and children were observed to be kind and considerate on both days of the inspection. Staff who spoke to the inspector were knowledgeable on the children's likes, dislikes and family background. Many of the children also had siblings in other rooms in the service. The behaviour management policy was on display in the toddler room. Staff were prompt in attending to the children's care needs. For example, staff in the baby room were observed helping children to settle into the service. Children were held and comforted when upset. The manager of the service was available to assist in the room for nappy changing and helping to settle the children who were settling into the service.

The facilities for play indoors were adequate to meet the needs of the children attending the service. All preschool rooms were equipped with suitable toys and equipment to meet the needs of the play and learning of the children regarding their age and stage of development. For example, the wobbler room had a range of toys displayed on shelved units for the children to play with. There were dolls, clothes, jigsaws, books and plastic bricks. There were paints, crayons and paper for children to use.

The baby room was equipped with rattlers and small toys to stimulate the fine motor and gross motor of the children attending.

The preschool room upstairs was resourced with various areas of interest such as a home corner, a dress up area and a construction area. The room had tables and chairs which were in a snake shape to allow the children to see each other more clearly while they were enjoying their tabletop activities.

(b)

There were two sleep rooms in the service with full sized cots for children to sleep in. There were cot beds for older children to sleep in in the afternoon in the toddler room. Nappies were changed regularly and as needed. Children who soiled their clothes when playing in the outdoor area were changed by the staff when they came inside after playing in the outdoor area. Tissues were provided and staff were observed cleaning noses for the children when required. Children were assisted when going to the toilet as required. Information on the children's daily activities were shared with parents on the mobile phone app in use in the service. Staff demonstrated how this application was used by showing the inspectors examples of individual children's records. Parents were observed collecting their children. Staff were observed giving parents information on their children's day in the hallway of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The children in the toddler room were put down to sleep on cot beds in the preschool room. They were provided with blankets but there were no sheets placed on the beds.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service has purchased sheets for the beds in the toddler room. The beds will be set up with the sheets for the comfort of the sleeping children.

Supporting documentation submitted

A receipt confirming the sheets have been ordered was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

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

There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service. Parents provided morning snacks for children. The service provided breakfast, dinner at mid-day and a snack at mid-afternoon for the children. There was a 3-week rotating menu in place in the service. Children were served a freshly cooked dinner served from the onsite kitchen on the first day of the inspection. The children had beef stroganoff served to them at midday. Children were given water to drink with their meals. Children who asked for extra portions were provided with them. Children were given water to drink from bottles provided by their parents, which staff refilled during the day for them. The 3-week rotating menu included provision for fresh meat and vegetables cooked for the children daily.

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:

Access to the service was gained through the front door by ringing a bell. There was a bell system for parents to call to whichever room their child was in. Staff could observe the person through the door prior to allowing them access to the service. The fire doors were not obstructed. The main stairway was well lit. There was a banister in place for the safety of staff and children.

Infection Control:

Children were observed washing their hands prior to snack and mealtimes and after using the toilet in the preschool room.

Safe sleep

The sleeping children's colour, breathing and position were observed and recorded every 10 minutes as outlined in the services safe sleep policy. Children over two slept on low level beds in the wobbler room on the ground floor in the service. A staff member was observed to stay and supervise the children in the room.

Administration of medication

The service had an administration of medication policy. The policy was reviewed by the inspector. Previous records of medication that had been administered in the service were reviewed by the inspector. It was clearly documented; the consent was signed by the parent, and the document of the administration procedure was verified and signed by two staff members.

Accident and Incidents

The service had a policy on the management of accidents and incidents in the service. The inspectors reviewed copies of accident and incident reports in the service. The documentation reviewed was in line with the services policy and were signed by the parents of the children to confirm they had been informed of the incidents in the service.

Outings

The service did not facilitate outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every 3 years. There were Garda vetting disclosures on file for all staff members, however the vetting disclosures for three staff members were not dated within the previous 3 years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting.
2. Through conversations with staff, it was established that the service did not have any appropriate means of quickly and safely evacuating immobile younger children.

Infection Control:

Inconsistencies in practice were observed and at variance with the service's infection control measures:

3. Children in the baby room were not observed to have their hands washed after nappy changing which is not in line with the service's nappy changing policy.
4. A staff member involved in nappy changing were observed to wear rings and bracelets which posed as a risk to cross contamination and is at variance with the services dress code policy and hand hygiene policy.
5. Premade formula bottles were observed not stored in the fridge in line with Safe Food guidelines.
6. The changing mat was not cleaned between nappy changes in the baby room.
7. A staff involved in nappy changing was not observed to wash hands before feeding young children.
8. There was no hand soap available for hygienic handwashing in the wobbler room toilet.
9. In the toddler room toilet one of the toilets did not have hand soap available at all times.
10. The service had no policy on the cleaning and sterilising of soothers.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. Garda vetting disclosures have been renewed for all three staff members and are now available on file in the service. The service will ensure all required Garda vetting will be renewed every 3 years as required.

2.

A double buggy has been purchased to aid the existing evacuation procedure.

3. 4.

Staff have been reminded of the nappy changing policy in place in the service. This policy has been discussed at the staff meeting following the inspection.

5.

Staff have been reminded to store premade formula in the fridge in the service as per the policy in place in the service which adheres to safe food practice.

6. 7.

Staff have been reminded to clean the nappy changing mat between nappy changes as stated in the services nappy changing procedure. Staff have also been reminded of the importance to wash their hands following changing nappies and before serving food.

8.9.

All soap dispensers in the service have been replenished made available at all sinks for hand washing.

10.

A new policy on the cleaning and sterilising of soothers has been developed shared with staff and is now available in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.

Renewed Garda vetting for the three staff members was received by the inspector.

2.

A new buggy has been ordered, and the invoice was received by the inspector.

3.4.

A copy of the nappy changing policy was reviewed by the inspector. A copy of the agenda where the policy was discussed with staff was received by the inspector.

5.

The policy for the storage of premade formula was received.

6,7.

The nappy changing policy was received by the inspector.

8.9.
A photograph of the hand soap dispensers and disposable paper towel dispensers was received by the inspector.

10.
The policy now in place for the cleaning and sterilising of soothers in the service was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence received is satisfactory to meet the requirements of 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 immediately available to the children during the inspection. There were two staff working directly with the children who were trained in a first aid responder course.

(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.

Non-Compliance Information

On review of the staff roster in the service the inspector noted there was no staff member trained in a first aid responder course immediately available to the children on two mornings between the hours of 07:45 and 09:00 while there were children in the service.

This non-compliance has been found on previous inspections. Despite a submission of a corrective and preventative response following these inspections it has not prevented the same non-compliance again on this inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An additional two staff members have been booked to complete a First Aid Responder course in October 25.

There will be a total of five staff trained in a first aid responder course working in the service on completion of this course.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence that two staff have been booked to complete a first aid responder course was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence received is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 template in place in the service to record any fire drill that takes place in the service.

(b) There was a record available to demonstrate the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service This maintenance was last carried out in November 2024. The smoke alarm was last serviced in June 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Fire drills were not completed monthly. Through discussion with four staff, it was established that fire drills are only completed every 3 months and not monthly as recorded and outlined in the service's fire safety policy.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A fire drill was carried out shortly after the inspection. The requirement to carry out monthly fire drills in the service has been added to the workbook in the service and will be checked monthly by the manager.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the fire drill was received by the inspector. The new template in place noting the requirement for monthly fire drills was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate 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

(d)

The service required cleaning, repair and general maintenance, the following was observed:

1. The outdoor play area was unkempt and lacked invitations to play. For example:

- The resource of the outdoor classroom was not used to its full potential. There were large boxes stored in the area impeding the children's free movement and enjoyment of the room.
- There was a couch which was worn, torn and grubby and needed to be replaced.
- The area had limited resources for children to play. For example, the mud kitchen had limited equipment for the children to play with.
- There was an adult sized bench with broken shards of plastic on the arm rests.

2. There were several repairs required in the service:

- There was a picnic bench for children broken up in pieces lying against the wall beside the door out to the area.
- A child was observed on a small tractor with no seat on it as it was broken.
- There was a large planter unit to the side of the area with two overgrown and rotting plants in the unit. One of the plants had fallen through the piece of furniture and it was on the concrete.
- Old and broken toys were thrown up on to the roof of the storage unit used to store the toys in the outdoor area.
- The door handle to the sleep room from the toddler room was broken and therefore the sleep room was not accessible for staff. Staff were required to access the sleep room from the main hallway.
- A number of hand towel dispensers were broken in the service.

The service required cleaning and upkeep:

- A dustpan and brush full of debris and dirt was propped against the wall beside the playroom door to the garden and accessible to children.
- Within the wobbler room there was dust, cobwebs and build up observed in the corners.
- The preschool walls and skirting boards were visibly marked, dirty and had scuffed and peeling paint.
- In the entrance hall there was dust and cobwebs evident and paint on the walls was scuffed and marked.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1.

The service has contacted an outside agency to advise on how to continue to develop the outdoor play area. A horticulturist has been employed to upgrade the planting in the garden area. The outdoor area will continue to be reviewed and developed in the service in consultation with the staff during staff meetings. All worn and damaged toys have been removed from the outdoor classroom and outdoor play area. The classroom has been cleared and is now set up for the play and enjoyment of the children.

2.

All broken equipment has been removed from the outdoor area. The large planter has been emptied of soil. The door handle has been repaired. The hand towel dispensers and soap dispensers have been replaced.

A contract cleaning company has carried out a deep cleaning in the service since the inspection. This service has been contracted to carry out regular scheduled deep cleaning in the service going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.

A receipt from horticulturist which was employed by the service to carry out work in the outdoor area was received by the inspector.

A photograph of the re purposed outdoor classroom set up and resourced for play was received by the inspector.

A photograph of the empty planter was received by the inspector.

2.

A photograph of the outdoor area which has been cleared of all broken toys was received by the inspector.

A photograph of the liquid soap dispensers and hand towel dispensers which have been replaced throughout the service was received by the inspector.

Photographs of the hallway which has been cleaned and upgraded with comfortable seating was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a complaints policy in place in the service. This policy documents how the service deals with complaints made in the service. The manager showed the inspectors documented evidence of how they managed a complaint. These documents were in line with the services policy.