

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK079
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Name of Service:	The Growing Patch Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	Newpark Close Family Resource Centre, Newpark Close, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 PF63
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Shortall
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	19/03/2026
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Date 2 of Inspection:	20/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	33
Day 2	AM	33	PM	33

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

The Growing Patch Childcare Centre is a registered full day childcare service which is governed by a board of management employed by the Newpark Close Family Resource Centre in Kilkenny City. The childcare service currently provides sessional and part-time childcare services including a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service between the hours of 08:30 to 17:45. There are four pre-school classrooms provided for children between the ages of 1 to 6 years. These include the baby/wobbler room for children aged 1 to 2 years called the “Bluebells Room”, the toddler room for children aged between 2 to 3 years called the “Buttercup Room” and 2 preschool rooms called the “Primrose Room” and the “Acorn Room”. While there is a large all weather play area available to the side of the building, since the last inspection on 08 April 2025, each classroom has now been provided with a smaller outdoor area, which can be directly accessed via patio doors from their individual classrooms. There is a designated sleep room adjacent to the baby/ wobbler room and a designated kitchen for the storage and preparation of meals provided by the service.

Staffing

There are 20 staff members employed in the service which includes 14 pre-school staff, 3 school aged staff and 3 kitchen staff. The registered provider does not work directly with the children attending the service. All 14 staff who as part of their role in the service hold 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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- 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.

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

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

Regulation 10-Policies Procedure etc. of a Pre-School service,

Regulation 15- Record of a Pre-School Child,

Regulation 16(1) -Record in Relation to Pre-School Service,

Regulation 23-Safeguarding health, Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 24-Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance,

Regulation 26- Fire Safety Measures.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included all four classrooms and the outside play 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 director of services, registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Compliance Information

Since the last inspection in April 2025, the registered provider ensured that the proposed change in registration details regarding the name of the designated person in charge of the service had been appropriately notified to the registration department. All registration details on the agency's register of services were found to be correct on the day of 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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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) There was a named designated person in charge who facilitated the inspection. A second named person who can deputise as required was also present.

(b) At all times during the inspection the designated person in charge and the deputy designated person in charge were both in the service.

(2) Twenty staff files were reviewed by the inspector on the day including the registered provider.

(a)(b) Two references were available on file for each staff member from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates had been obtained for each person who was working directly with the children in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for those working directly with the children.

Garda Vetting was also available for the incoming registered provider.

(d) Police vetting was available on file for one staff member employed in the service, who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualification for each staff member, were available for review by the inspector. The documents provided, demonstrated that all staff working directly with the children, held at least the minimum Level 5 ranging to Level 8 qualifications in early childhood care and education, on the National Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Framework.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 as specified in Schedule 5 were available for inspection and specific to the service. The inspector reviewed the following policies and found that they contained adequate information as required- Complaints policy, policy on administration of medication, policy on outings, policy on accidents and incidents, policy on outdoor play, recruitment policy, staff training policy and supervision of staff training 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 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) The inspector observed that throughout both days of inspection, an adequate number of staff members were observed directly caring for and supervising the children in attendance including times when staff went for breaks, in line with the staff roster provided for review on the day of inspection.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children as required by schedule 6 was maintained as follow during the day 1 of the inspection.

The “Bluebell” (baby/wobbler) Room – there were 6 children aged 1 to 2 years directly cared for by 2 staff members.

The “Buttercup” (toddler) Room- there were 10 children aged 2 to 3 years directly cared for by 2 staff members.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The “Primrose” Room- There were 9 children aged 3 to 5 years directly supervised by 3 staff members.

In the afternoon there were 8 children aged 3 to 4 years directly cared for by 2 staff members

The “Acorn” Room- there were 9 children aged 3 to 5 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

On day 2 of inspection there 33 children aged 1 to 5 years directly cared for by 10 staff members.

(8)(a) The staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider and designated person in charge ensured that there was always at least two qualified staff members on the premises while the children were in attendance.

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 records of pre-school children the inspector observed that the following details (a) to (f), (h) and (i) were recorded clearly on the children’s pre-school records.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(g) The inspector observed that the recording of individual children’s general medical practitioner’s (GP) details was not consistent.

While the inspector observed that the GP’s details were recorded on 3 of the 12 records reviewed, the following non-compliances were observed.

There was no GP details recorded on 3 of the 12 pre-school records.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Limited information regarding 6 children's GPs was only found on the individual child's vaccination record accompanying the child's pre-school record, and not on the preschool record.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider has submitted the following response.

Corrective and Preventive Action

All parents were contacted to fill out their GP details, and all are now on file. For both ELC and SAC.
In August for registration this form will be included in our registration form.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of new GP details form.

Summary Comment

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

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;*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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

On review of records required as regulation 16 (a) to (k) the inspector observed the following.

- (a) Details of all employees of the service were maintained as required.
- (b) to (f) All details as required by elements (b) to (f) were detailed in the service's statement of purpose and function, displayed in the service.
- (g) Policies, procedures and statements specific to the type of service were maintained in line with regulation 10.
- (h) Children's daily attendance to the service was observed to be recorded daily.
- (i) The inspector reviewed the staff roster for the week of the inspection and observed that details of staff hours on both days of inspection correlated with details provided on the staff roster presented.
- (j) A sample of 6 administration of medication records were reviewed by the inspector and observed to have details specific to the procedure carried out, recorded in line with the service's administration of medication policy.
- (k) A sample of 20 accident /incident forms reviewed by the early years inspector was observed to have all been completed in line with the service's revised accident and incident policy and were all signed by parents of the child involved.

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

(1)(b)

In each of the classroom the inspector observed that children's individual needs were responded to by staff. Staff engaged with children in the daily activities of each classroom, listening to their ideas, implementing their emergent interests into activities and adjusting the daily routines to children's needs.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

For example, on the first day of inspection, as the inspector arrived to the “Acorn classroom” the children and staff were preparing to go on an outing. The children anxiously looked at the inspector demonstrating concern that her arrival in the service was going to disturb plans which had already been made the day before. The staff in the room explained how the children in the class, but especially one child with additional needs had a particular interest in dinosaurs and as a group they had decided to go on an outing through the adjacent nature reserve, a short walk from the service. The staff in the room encouraged the children to explain the connection with dinosaurs, which they duly did, explaining that while walking through the nature reserve they could hear and see the dinosaurs from a tourist attraction in the hotel grounds at the other side of the nature reserve. The excitedly explained that it was like walking through a dinosaur jungle.

The inspector also observed that staff had created interest trays around the theme of dinosaurs with green and brown coloured rice and small dinosaur figurines.

In the Bluebells classroom, staff were observed to be responsive and kind to all the children in attendance enjoying all the developing personalities and gently alleviating any little conflict arising between sharing toys and play materials. One little child who had been away from the service due to illness was settling back in and staff responded to the child’s anxiety, holding and cuddling the child on the large armchair as required.

While the staff present were observed supervising all the children present, the inspector observed that staff were particularly vigilant observing a child who had just started walking, ensuring that clear floor space furniture was provided for the child to pull to standing position and walk carefully alongside the anchored shelves or play kitchen to support themselves. The child’s developing motor skills were safely supported while the staff also promoted the child’s independence and ensured a safe environment was provided.

At mealtimes staff ensured that children were involved in the preparation for meals. After children and staff washed their hands prior to snack and meals times, children helped with laying tables bowls cups and spoons. Meal and snack menus were displayed on the parents notice board just inside the entrance door to ensure parents were aware of what meals children would have while in attendance in the service.

Children were observed to sit together with their friend and staff at mealtimes enjoying the foods offered such as the home-made chicken curry and rice on day one of the inspection. Staff ensured that children were comfortable in asking for more and were encouraged to serve themselves from the large serving bowls of food provide.

Children poured themselves glasses of water or lightly juice flavoured water as they needed.

Younger children had meals appropriately adjusted to their developmental stage of eating and staff ensured that any parents that wished for meals to be provided from home were appropriately stored and reheated as required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Staff were observed to support children with toileting and younger children had their nappies changed at regular intervals and when required throughout the day. Staff were observed to engage in gentle animated conversations with the children during nappy changing ensuring that the child was comfortable and happy during the experience.

A sleep room with appropriate cots and stackable beds was available in the service for any child who wished to sleep, however no child demonstrated a desire to sleep throughout the inspection as most of the children left the service before 14:00 hours.

In each classroom there was evidence of documented curricular planning with correlating children's art projects displayed. At drop off and collection times, parents ;/ guardians were observed to enter the classrooms and chat to their child's key worker while also enjoying the opportunity to see their child's physical environment at the service.

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 service had a reception area where the main entrance door to the childcare service was secured with a keypad system which was responded to by staff members or the designated person in charge at reception. This helped reduce the risk of any unauthorised person from entering the building and to prevent any child exiting the building unsupervised.

The perimeter of the entire service was secured with a high metal fence.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed that staff ensured that the procedures outlined in the service's infection control policy were followed in practice. Both children and staff were observed to wash their hands before meals, after toileting, outdoor and messy play. On observation of nappy changing procedures for younger children, the inspector observed that all nappy changing procedures observed were carried out in line with the infection control policy's nappy changing procedure and handwashing procedures for both the staff and the children.

Safe Sleep:

A sleep room was provided adjacent to the baby/wobbler room providing two standard cots and two stackable beds with suitable bed linen

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Outing:

On day 1 of inspection the inspector observed staff in the Acorn pre-school room implement the service's outings policy in organising a trip to the nearby nature reserve with nine children being accompanied by three staff members. The outing was carried out in line with the actions required in the service's outings policy.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The inspector observed the following that could potentially cause injury to a child in the wobbler and toddler outdoor play areas.

1. The edges of some of the cement pillars in both outdoor areas had sharp corners which could potentially injure a child if they were to run or fall against them.
2. There was a sloping aspect towards the right-hand side of the wobbler play area where it is acknowledged that an old divider was placed to slow and prevent the children from running down the slope, however the gate of this divider was broken and provided a tripping hazard which could potentially injure staff or children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following response was submitted by the registered provider.

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The edges of the pillars have been covered with protective foam. Risk assessments will be carried out daily to include the pillars to ensure they remain safe, intact and covered.

2. We have a builder contacted who will commence the work to fill in this slope to a level surface

S: Level the outdoor play area identified in report.

M: The ground will be at a level surface for Children.

A: Builder confident this will be achieved

R: A safe space for Wobblers to play outdoors.

T: Completion within 3 weeks from today's date.

While we are waiting for the work to be completed, we have another route out for outdoor play through the Sleep room in large playground. The gate concerned, the divider gate has been removed. However, the children will not be using this area until work is complete.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of changes made in wobbler outdoor play area.

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 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 were five staff members employed in the service who had current first aid responder (FAR) training. Three staff members with FAR training were present in the service on the day of inspection, as recorded in the staff roster.

(2)(a)(b) A first aid bag was observed in each of the classrooms and was always available for the children. Records were observed to be maintained to demonstrate that first aid bags were checked monthly to ensure that the contents were adequate and in date.

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-

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (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.

Compliance Information

- (1) The inspector observed that each child's arrival and departure times to and from the pre-school service were recorded by the staff in each classroom.
- (3)(a) The designated person in charge and staff in the service were observed to ensure that no person other than the children attending the service, parents/ guardians dropping and collecting the children, employees or authorised persons gained entry to the childcare service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (3)(b) While it is acknowledged that the service maintained a visitors' book detailing the date and names of any visitors to the service, details such as the visitor's contact number, reason for visiting the service, name of person approving the visitor's entry and check in and out times were not requested or recorded.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response.

Corrective and Preventive Action

New visitors book was developed to include the visitors contact number, name, reason for visit, and name of person approving visitors' entry, including times in and out of the building. Old book has now been filed, with our new visitors book up and running since receiving the report.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of updated visitors' book.

Summary Comment

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (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.
- (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

On review of fire safety records, the inspector observed the following.

- (1)(a) Records demonstrated that fire drills were recorded monthly.
- (b) Records of the annual maintenance checks of the service's firefighting equipment and fire alarm system were maintained.

The last maintenance check for the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in May 2025 and for fire alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 12 March 2026.

- (4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the entrance hall. A fire assembly point was clearly signed in the car park.

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 childcare service for up to 80 children was available for inspection. The insurance certificate provided cover for the period 17 July 2025 to 16 July 2026.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that adequate clear floor space was provided in each of the classrooms for the children in attendance.

(2) The following floor spaces were measured and recorded on day 2 of the inspection.

Room Name	Space Available	Age of Children	Maximum number of Pre-school children that can be accommodated at any one time.
Wobbler Room (Bluebells Room)	25.7 metres square	1 to 2 years	9
Toddler Room (Buttercup Room)	31.4 metres square	2 to 3 years	13
Pre-School Room (Primrose Room)	36 metres square	3 to 6 years	15
Senior Pre-School Room (Acorn Room)	31.4 metres square	3 to 6 years	13