

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

STUSLA 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:	Kathleen Meagher
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	08/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	32	PM	8
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

The Growing Patch Childcare Centre is a community childcare service providing sessional, part-time and full day childcare services, located in Kilkenny city.

The service provides childcare services for children aged 1 to 6 years of age and is open between the hours of 08:30 and 17:45.

The service operates from a purpose-built premises adjoined to a community family resource centre. The childcare section of the premises is comprised of four preschool classrooms, a designated kitchen and includes direct access to an onsite outdoor play area and some smaller play areas for growing plants and sensory water play.

Staffing

There were 20 staff members employed in the service including 2 designated kitchen staff and a cleaner.

All staff who as part of their role in the service, were employed to work directly with the children in attendance, held at least a minimum Level 5 qualification in early childhood care and education (ECCE).

The registered provider does not work in the childcare service but is available to the designated person in charge and staff in the family resource centre, next door.

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 following regulations were selected for inspection, Regulations 8, 9, 10, 11, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations 10, 21, 22, 23 and 24.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the classrooms and outdoor area.

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

On the day of inspection, the inspector was informed that the registered provider as detailed on the Early Years Inspectorate register was no longer in position. No Change in Circumstances (CIC) form had been submitted to the CIC registration department. A referral was made to the registration department regarding the service operating outside of its registration details. This non-compliance was previously identified on last inspection on the 25 September 2024.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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.

(3) Where a registered provider has been unable for good and proper reason to notify the Agency within the time specified in paragraph (1) or (2), as the case may be, of a 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), the registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing of the change as soon as possible thereafter.

Compliance Information

(3) The person in charge and registered provider elect submitted a change in circumstances form the CIC registration office on the evening of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The service had not notified changes in the registered provider's details 60 days prior to the change taking effect. The service was operating outside of its registration details. This non-compliance was previously identified on inspection on 25 September 2024. It is acknowledged that the designated person in charge and the new registered provider submitted a change in circumstances form immediately on the evening of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A change of service provider was submitted on the 29 April 2025.

The new registered provider's Garda Vetting has been also submitted to the Early Years Change in Circumstances department.

Maintain an inspection check list to ensure compliance with regulations monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of Change in Circumstances application for registered provider.

Copy of change in circumstance procedure policy.

Summary Comment

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

(a)(b) Two references were available on file for each of 14 staff members, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

One reference was available for each of three staff members, 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) Two references were not available for each of two staff members employed in the service.

Two references were not available for the incoming registered provider.

A second reference was not available for three staff members employed in the service, who as part of their roles in the service worked directly with the children.

Seven references that were available had not been validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff and registered provider have two references on file in the childcare managers office.

All references have now been validated.

A new validating letter has been developed and will be used when new staff are being appointed.

Maintain an inspection check list ensure compliance with regulations monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of validation letter template.

Summary Comment

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

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.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The recruitment policy did not state how the records relating to the recruitment process for any person employed in the service are stored, and for how long these records are retained.
2. The staff training policy did not set out how staff training needs are identified and supported, what resources are available for training, it did not detail what induction training is provided or how staff training records are maintained in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The recruitment policy has now been updated to show how all records are being stored and for how long they are being stored for.

The policy handbook has been updated.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of Staff Recruitment policy.

Copy of Staff Development policy.

Summary Comment

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

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, an adequate number of staff members were observed directly caring for and supervising the children in attendance.

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

The “Buttercup” (Wobbler) Room- there were 4 children aged 1 to 2 years directly cared for by 2 staff members.

The “Bluebell” (Toddler) Room – there were 9 children aged 2 to 3 years directly cared for by 2 staff members.

The “Primrose” Room- There were 8 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 11 children aged 4 to 6 years directly cared for by 2 staff members.

In the evening 8 children aged 3 to 5 years remained in the service directly supervised by 3 staff members.

(8) On review of the staff roster the inspector observed that the service ensured that there were always at least two qualified staff members on the premises while there were children in attendance.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Throughout the four classrooms there was adequate and appropriate furniture, play equipment and materials provided for the children. Each classroom contained age-appropriate interest areas which included kitchen/ home areas, construction areas, rest and reading areas and tables created with themed sensory materials such as small world animal figurines, coloured pasta and lentil beans and sensory materials.

There were child level shelves which provided children with access to a variety of colourful and wooden manipulative, connective and stackable materials, jigsaws, pegboards, bead and maze tables and mark making materials.

The outdoor play area had a soft play surface with age-appropriate children’s seating, ride on toys, a climbing frame and slide. An additional outdoor area was specifically created for messy water play and for gardening.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

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

Compliance Information

The staff informed the inspector that all meals and snacks are provided in the service.

Children who arrive early are provided with breakfast, if they have not had breakfast at home. A selection of wheat-based cereals, fruit, crackers, toast and yogurts are offered. Drinking water is provided in each classroom where children can access their own drinking bottles or obtain glasses of fresh water.

Staff described that a snack containing two food groups is provided at 10:30 hours and is comprised of cheese, cold meats, fruit or yogurts.

A two-week menu plan ensures that the children’s main hot meal of the day is varied throughout the week with options such as spaghetti bolognese, roast chicken, lasagne, chicken curry, vegetable pasta, cooked ham, vegetables and mash, and beef or chicken casserole on offer.

On the day of inspection, the inspector observed that the children had savoury mince and mash, of which the inspector observed that the savoury mince contained a variety of finely chopped carrots, mushrooms, green beans and sweetcorn.

The service chef explained that the menu is reviewed frequently dependent on the children's food choices, likes and dislikes. The chef demonstrated that the service had other food options available if a child didn't like or feel like the dinner on the daily menu. The refrigerator was observed to be well stocked with a selection of cold meats, eggs, cheese, fruit and yogurt.

At 15:00 hours children had their evening meal, which on the day of inspection was observed to be chicken goujons and beans. The staff informed the inspector that other evening meals included home-made pizza, chicken wraps, ham and cheese toasties or soup and brown bread.

The staff were observed to support children with their meals, responding promptly and offering some more food if a child appeared to still be hungry or required another food option.

Food was prepared in the kitchen appropriate to the various children's age, with the chef ensuring that younger children's food was finely chopped or of a soft texture.

Milk and water were offered at each mealtime with staff sitting with the children engaging in the ritual of the meal and supporting the children to enjoy their mealtimes.

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 was secured with a keypad system at the main entrance, to prevent any unauthorised person from entering the building and to prevent any child exiting the building unsupervised. The outdoor play area was secured with a high metal fence.

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

Infection Control:

Staff and children were observed to wash their hands after toileting, nappy changing procedures, messy, sensory and outdoor play.

Cleaning schedules were maintained in the service with each classroom maintaining a daily list of cleaning tasks and records detailing when they were carried out.

Administration of Medication:

A sample of five administration of medication records were reviewed on the day of inspection and were observed to be completed and documented in line with the service's administration of medication policy. Staff were well informed of the safe procedure for the administration and storage of medications.

Safe Sleep:

There was a designated sleep room which provided a quiet calm environment for sleeping children. Two standard cots and three blue stackable beds were available with appropriate bed linen for any child who wished to sleep during the day. Physical sleep checks were taken and recorded on sleeping children, every 10-minutes with staff ensuring that the sleep room temperature was maintained at the recommended temperature of 16 to 20°C.

Outings:

While the service had an adequate outings policy in place, the designated person in charge and staff informed the inspector that outings were not operated away from the service.

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 in the classrooms demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child attending the service was checked in and out of the service with their times of arrival and departure documented.

(3)(a)(b) The designated person in charge and staff ensured that no other person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without their entry being approved by an employee.

Any authorised visitors to the service were required to record the date of entry, their name, contact number, reason for entry, name of person who approved access and check in and out times on the visitors record book located at the reception.

(4) The visitors record demonstrated to the inspector that a record of authorised visitors to the service had been retained for the previous year and longer.

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 twelve staff members employed in the service who had current first aid responder (FAR) training. Eight staff members with FAR training were present in the service on the day of inspection, as documented in the staff roster. On review of maintained staff rosters, it was demonstrated that there was always at least three staff members with FAR training onsite, while children attended the service.

(2)(a) A first aid bag was observed in each of the classrooms.

(b) The first aid bag in each classroom was always available for the children and records were maintained to demonstrate that it was checked monthly to ensure that its contents were adequate and in date.

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.

(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)(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 August 2024 and for fire alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 12 March 2025.

(2) All records relating to fire safety in the service were stored onsite and open for inspection.

(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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) The record of monthly fire drills maintained in the service demonstrated that a fire drill was last recorded as having taken place in September 2024. This was not in line with fire safety in preschools recommendations of carrying out a monthly fire drill.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Fire Drills have taken place. A safety audit has taken place, and new procedures are now in place. A new fire safety audit book was obtained, and the monthly fire drill will be recorded monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

New Fire Safety Book.

Copy of most recent fire drill procedure.

Summary Comment

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