

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LD026
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Catkins Early Years Service
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Longford Women's Link, Willow House, Ardnacassa Avenue, Longford Town, Co. Longford
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<b>Eircode:</b>	N39 H6R7
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Tara Farrell
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	17/11/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	53	PM	47
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	T. Duignan and F. Maher.
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors

### Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.
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### Description of service

Catkins Early Years Service is a non-profit based service and operates from the grounds of the Longford Women's Link. The service provides full day care, part-time and sessional care to pre-school children aged 0-6 years and is registered to provide school age care. The service operates from 8:00hrs to 17:30hrs, from Monday to Friday.

The early years' service is in a purpose-built single storey premises in Longford town. The service has five care rooms for the preschool children, one sleep room, nappy change and sanitary facilities.

The premises has its own kitchen, where children's meals and snacks are freshly prepared and cooked daily by a chef. There is a staff room, office, and storage areas.

Spacious and secured outdoor play areas for children's play are located at the side and rear of the service with direct access from the care rooms.

A car park at the front of the premises is available for drop off and collection of the children attending and for staff members.

### Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service. The inspection was facilitated by the manager who was the designated person in charge. Thirty-three adults are employed in the service including the registered provider.

Of the twenty-six adults present on the day of the inspection, twenty were working directly with the children. This included sixteen core staff members, one adult on community employment work placement and four students on work experience placement. The person in charge was available to provide additional support when needed. The chef, caretaker and two cleaners were also present.

All adults working directly with the children had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under.

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulations 23 and 27. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby, Buttercup, and Junior Preschool rooms.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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

*(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

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that there were six new staff members employed.

- (2)
- (a), (b) Two validated references were available on file for six staff members and four workplace students from either a past employer or from a reputable source.
- (c) (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all employed staff members and four workplace students. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) Police vetting was on file required for two recently employed staff members who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualification or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent, for five recently employed staff members, were available for review by the inspector. The documents provided, demonstrated that the staff member working directly with the children, held at least a Level 5 qualification in early childhood care and education, on the National Quality and Qualifications Ireland (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) There were fifty-three children attending the service being supervised directly by twenty-one adults.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

(8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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 entrance door to the service was electronically secured to allow staff to control entry to and exit from the service. Outdoor areas were enclosed and had secured gates to allow staff to control access to the outdoor areas and prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. The children did not have access to the kitchen. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

Staff members advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if observed that a child may be wearing them.

They were aware of the potential choking risks that grapes posed when asked by the inspectors.

The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

##### Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Staff members were observed washing their hands during the inspection. Children's toileting was sensitively managed. Two nappy change procedures were observed, and the practice observed was consistent with the service's nappy change procedure.

Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

##### Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection; written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. The staff members were familiar with required practices when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored in the service.

##### Safe Sleep:

There was one sleep room with a total of six cots. Twelve low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. It was observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children, and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in their care. Comfortable rest areas were available for the children in each care room if they wished to take a break from activities and rest.

### Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out, and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed.

### Outing:

The service does not conduct outings.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for all staff members and 4 students on work placement experience; however, one vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. There was no documentary evidence available that daily indoor room environmental risk assessments were consistently completed to ensure a safe play and work environment for the children and staff.
3. The chairs used in the Baby and Junior preschool rooms were not suitable for children aged 1-3 years to use for meals and tabletop activities as they were unable to place their feet on the floor for stability and balance.

### Infection Control:

4. Twelve low level beds were stored in the lobby of the sanitary area used by the junior preschool room; this was unhygienic and posed a risk for cross contamination.

### Safe Sleep:

5. Two children aged under two years were observed to be sleeping on low beds instead of a cot.
6. A sleep plan was not available for the two children aged under two years observed to be sleeping on low beds in the Baby room.
7. The mattress used in cot 5 was too small for the cot frame and created a risk of entrapment as gaps were observed at the side of the mattress.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### **Corrective & Preventive Action**

#### **General Safety:**

1. The Garda Vetting disclosure is on file.
2. The Centre Manager went through the forms, requirements and how to submit. All rooms now submitting their assessments daily via the Little Vista App. Centre Manager sent a reminder message on little vista. The task has been delegated by Lead Educators with an alternative person delegated in the case of absence.
3. Two sets of new chairs purchased, 15cm chairs & 20cm chairs. This will ensure we have height appropriate chairs for the smallest children attending regardless of height. Lead Educators know now to check their feet touch the floor.

#### **Infection Control:**

4. The beds were removed and are now stored in a storage press beside the room.

#### **Safe Sleep:**

5. Floor beds have been purchased for the children aged under 2 years who do not sleep in a cot.
6. Sleep Plans are completed as per Tusla Sleep Guidelines. The Lead Educator trained in the sleep guidelines to ensure the forms are completed in the future. The sleep plan requirement now included in the full policies and procedures for the service.
7. A new mattress has been purchased. All mattresses are labelled to match with the corresponding cot so the long cot doesn't end up with a short mattress again after they are stripped for cleaning.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

#### **General Safety:**

1. Garda Vetting document.
2. Risk assessment documents.
3. Photographs of chairs purchased.

#### **Infection Control:**

4. Photograph of new storage area.

#### **Safe Sleep:**

5. Photograph of new floor beds.
6. Completed sleep plans.
7. Photograph of new mattress correctly fitted in cot.

### **Summary Comment**

The written response, photographic and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Service. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23. This area of practice will be assessed at the 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.*
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.*
- (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 person in charge ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a), (b) The person in charge ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained. The manager ensured that the inspectors' entry to the service was recorded in the visitor's book.
- (4) The person in charge confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

### 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) Staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the care rooms.
  - (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children were available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

### 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) A written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 14 November 2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm were last serviced July 2025 and 17 July 2025 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the entrance hallways and entrance of the building used to accommodate Daisies and Poppies rooms at the rear of the premises.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

The children were observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection by the adults caring for them both indoors in their care rooms, using the sanitary area, during transitions and in the outdoor areas.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 31 December 2025.