

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015LH017

Name of Service: Clever Clogs

Address of Service: St. Brigid's National School, Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Eircode: A92 Y236

Name of Registered Provider: Barbara Rothwell

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 07/08/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	5	PM	1
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath.
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham
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.

Description of service

Clever Clogs in St. Brigid's National School is one of three early years services operated by the registered provider, all of which are located in Drogheda in Co. Louth. The service is conducted from two adjoining prefabricated units positioned on the grounds of a primary school and is registered to accommodate a maximum of 44 pre-school children aged 2 – 6 years. Eligible pre-school children are facilitated to avail of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme daily from 9.00am to 12.00midday and children can remain in the service for full day care as required. School age children are also accommodated in the service. Two separate outdoor play areas are provided for sole use by the children attending the early years' service.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service and generally engages in administrative duties off-site, with an area manager employed to coordinate the day-to-day management of the three services. Eleven staff members are employed in this service, of whom 7 work directly with the pre-school children and who hold a major award in early childhood care and education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), three staff members are employed to work with school aged children only and another staff member is employed to clean the service for 3 hours each day. Four of these staff members work during the ECCE term and were off for the summer on the day of inspection, an additional staff member was on statutory leave. On the day of inspection, a member of staff from another one of the Clever Clog's services came to the service to assist with lunch cover. In total on the day of inspection there was four childcare staff and one staff member to provide lunch time relief. Additionally present were two staff members for school aged children with a third staff member commencing at 1pm.

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.

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 supervisor, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Twelve staff files were reviewed.

Twenty-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for all staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) All childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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) Present on the morning of the inspection were the supervisor, 4 childcare staff along with 1 staff member providing relief for lunchtime breaks working directly with the 5 children attending the service.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity on the day of inspection:

- The **Caterpillar room** there were 2 adults with 5 children ranging in age from 4 years to 5 years children attending on a full day care basis. Eleven school aged children were also present.
- The **Butterfly room** there were 2 adults with 10 school aged children.

One additional staff member arrived to provide relief for staff lunch breaks from another of the clever clogs service.

Non-Compliance Information

(8) The registered provider did not ensure that two adults were on the premises from 08.00am to 08.30am when the service was in operation, as evidenced in the staff roster maintained in the service and confirmed by the supervisor. Only one staff member was rostered in on the day of inspection and five children were present between 08.00am and 08.30am before the second staff member arrived.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Rosters have now all been changed for two members of staff to commence at 8am. Two members of staff will always be rostered on for the 8am opening time. Please see new and up to date rosters attached.

Preventive Action

The Supervisor and Manager are now both responsible to check and approve roster making sure that two members are in at 8am and two till 6pm

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider submitted the updated roster to reflect that two staff are always present.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 11.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Children were observed being allowed to self-direct their own play. The children were afforded the opportunity to choose activities and to follow through on their choices and change activities if they so wish.
- The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence. Regular hand washing was observed by the children.
- All children in the service were observed enjoying energetic outdoor play with both their peers and staff members at scheduled times during the day.

Supporting Relationships

- Staff members communicated with parents and guardians on a daily basis, informally during drop off and collection
- The staff members were observed encouraging and collaborating with children in their play activities. They used welcoming facial expressions and gentle vocal tones when engaging with the children and showed a keen interest in what each child was doing. The children sought out staff members for praise, encouragement and reassurance. The staff encouraged the children to engage positively with each other by adopting simple social rules such as turn taking, sharing in play activities and resolving minor disputes.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Within the care room there were mats and cushions and soft furnishings for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed. Children did not require sleep on the day of inspection; six stackable beds were available if they did.

(3)(a) There was a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space which was enclosed by railings with an artificial grass covering.

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

- The care room was resourced with play materials and equipment which were laid out in interest areas and open shelving at their height which supported children to select and become involved in meaningful, sustained play experiences except for the non-compliances below.
- The outdoor spaces were equipped with age-appropriate play materials and equipment to facilitate the children to engage in energetic play and physical activity. The children had access to an artificial grass surfaced area with adequate room to run and play. A covered area was also available where children sat at the table on the day of inspection and completed jigsaws and art work.

Non-Compliance Information

In the Caterpillar Room:

1. The toy kitchen had limited play equipment. Also, the kitchen on the outdoor area had no equipment.
2. Dress up clothes were not available for the dolls.
3. The large toy house had no furniture.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. Natural materials now available for our kitchen area for the children to explore and learn
2. Dress up box with the doll's equipment was present but not displayed or at the children's reach. This box is now moved and placed in the area, for all children to see and use at any time. It is at their eye level.
3. New Doll equipment was bought for the Dolls House. This furniture is kept in the doll's house for the use of all the children within the room.

Preventive Action

1. To keep these added to all interest areas throughout the year and not only ECCE sessions.
2. When doing risk assessments each morning, room leaders are asked to check all equipment and areas in making sure all is adhered to. All equipment is to be kept out and stored at children's eye level

3. Checking each morning that all areas are set up correctly before the children arrive. If any equipment is broken to replace it immediately, therefore equipment will always be present.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs submitted to the Inspectorate of the areas of interest well developed and supported with equipment.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance's in Regulation 21.

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

At 10.30am to 11.00am morning snack takes place which is provided by the parents and stored in the refrigerator. Dinner is usually served between 1pm and 2pm (a little later the day of inspection) which was pasta marinara provided by an external catering company reheated in the service with garlic bread. An afternoon snack was served between 15:00 and 16:00pm provided by the parents. The drinks of choice was water.

Non-Compliance Information

Four children did not eat the dinner provided on the day of inspection and were not offered an alternative.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The external catering company provides dinners to Clever Clogs. Each day there is two options of dinners for the children. Please see invoice attached. On date of inspection there was only one dish on the menu. All other days there is two meals.

Preventive Action

Checking this with the external catering company to sure there is always two dishes available

Supporting documentation submitted

Menu submitted to the Inspectorate with two options available for the children.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 22.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The main gate to the service was secured and the outdoor spaces were enclosed. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and outdoor spaces.
- All play materials were placed on stable based shelving units.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy and nappy changing policy were implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- Fridges were available in the care rooms for the refrigeration of perishable items.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) All children present were signed in and out on arrival and departure.

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) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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.

(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 the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 21/07/2025.

(b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment on the premises. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 18/11/2024. The firefighting equipment was last serviced in 05/12/2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 48 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2025 to the 27th March 2026.