

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

4TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH061
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Name of Service:	The Grove Early Years Education Centre, Lifestyle Development Group CLG
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Address of Service:	Grove Early Years Centre, Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A92 NX96
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lorraine Cunningham
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	18/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	50	PM	35
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Swords Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell
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 Grove Early Years Education Centre, Lifestyle Development Group CLG is a registered community preschool service which operates from a converted two-storey unit in Co. Louth. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional care from 8.30am to 5.30pm. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The children have access to two rooms on the ground floor and two on the first floor. There is a kitchen area and sanitary facilities available. There is access to an outdoor area at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service. The registered provider employs 27 staff members. A Managing director, and assistant manager do not work directly with the children. A person in charge and deputy person in charge work in a supernumerary capacity. There are 15 staff members who work directly with the children. There is a cook who can also work directly with the children. There are seven staff members employed through community employment, two of whom can work directly with the children, three work on reception and one works on maintenance. A student was also completing a work experience placement in the service.

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

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 15 Records in Relation to a pre-school child, Regulation 21 Equipment and materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of a child, Regulation 25 - First aid and Regulation 27 Supervision.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 21, 23 and 27. As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms the Acorn and Seedling rooms and did not include the Foresters and Oak room.

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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
 - (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
 - (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.
- (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 designated person in charge of the service, and a there was a named person to deputise in their absence.
- (b) Following discussion with the person in charge, and review of the staff roster it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.
- (c) On discussion with staff members, there was a clearly defined person and deputy person in charge to ensure lines of accountability.

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(2) On the day of inspection, the recruitment files of the registered provider, 30 staff members and a student were reviewed.

(a)(b) There were 58 written and validated references, where required, available for the registered provider, 29 staff members and the student.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for all staff members, and the registered provider. However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years following a review of staff members previous employment in the service. This is examined in Regulation 23.

(d) Documentation available demonstrated that police vetting was not required for 23 staff members, student or the registered provider. International police vetting required for nine staff members was available alongside the certified translation where relevant.

(4) The person in charge, deputy person in charge, the cook, two of the staff members engaged in the community employment scheme and 15 staff members employed to work directly with the pre-school children, held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 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,

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Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the inspector's unannounced arrival, the adult child ratio was observed to be correct and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult-to-child ratios were observed:

- In the Seedlings Room there were 4 staff members and 16 children, aged between 1 year 11 months and 2 years 3 months old, attending on a part time or full day care basis.
- In the Acorn Room there were 3 staff members and 14 children, aged between 3 years 1 month and 4 years 1 month old, attending on a sessional basis. Following the sessional hours the ratio reverted to 2 staff members and 8 children attending on part time or full day care basis.
- In the Forester's room there were 4 staff members and 13 children attending the morning session. Following the sessional hours the ratio reverted to 3 staff members and 11 children. The children were aged between 2 years 8 months old to 4 years 5 months old
- In the Oak Room there were 2 staff members and 7 children, aged between 2 years and 8 months to 5 years old, attending the morning session. This room closed in the afternoon.

(8) Following a review of rosters, sign-in records and discussions with staff members the inspector could confirm that two staff members were always on the premises when the children were attendance in the service.

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;*

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(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.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and

(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service. A total sample of 12 child record forms were reviewed, to include children in attendance across all care rooms, and included the required information as detailed at (1) (a) to (j) above.

(3) The records, as detailed above, were available to review on site in a secure location in the service.

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 inspector observed that the children were engaged with different activities throughout the inspection. On the inspector's initial walk around of the service children were playing with the sensory items which included water, doing jigsaws or making puzzles with magnetic blocks in small groups or individually, playing in home corners which included a range of play and real-life materials or looking at books. In the seedlings room there was a sectioned area that contained soft play activities for the younger children. Toys and games available for the children were in low level containers on shelves that were accessible to the children.

Due to inclement weather the children accessed a change of environment in the sensory room and played musical games in their rooms.

The children had sufficient space to play at a table and to eat lunch and snacks at in Seedling and Acorn rooms as observed by the inspector.

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In the garden there was a range of play equipment for the children which included a variety of climbing equipment, seating areas and ride on toys. There was a section for the older children and a section for the younger children. A sensory room with soft equipment, light tubes and a large drawing board was also available.

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 secure entrance to the service with a buzzer system in place.
- The inspector was requested to sign into the service, and a record of visitors was maintained.
- Warm water was available for handwashing and was thermostatically controlled to not exceed 43°C to prevent a risk of scalding.
- Emergency exits, hallways and the entrance to the service were clear of obstructions.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary facilities had warm water, paper towels and soap available for effective hand washing.
- Children were observed to wash their hands before eating.
- Staff members wore gloves and aprons during nappy changes as per the service's nappy changing policy. The staff member washed their own and the children's hands after nappy changes and before returning to the care rooms. Children who could use the sanitary facilities independently were observed to wash their hands and staff reminded children as required.
- The service including the care rooms and the communal areas of the service were visually clean.

Safe Sleep:

- Children under 2 years old were provided with a cot for sleep.
- A thermometer was available in the care room and cot room to monitor the temperature whilst children slept. Staff were aware of procedures required should the temperature exceed 22°C whilst children slept.
- There were documented sleep checks of children whilst they were sleeping. Staff members spoken with were aware of the requirements of the 10-minute checks including monitoring the children's breathing, colour, position. The checks were recorded on the service's electronic application.

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Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The outdoor area was not sufficiently maintained to prevent a possible injury. The inspector observed the following.
 - The edging of the safety surface was worn, and sections was exposed which created a trip risk.
 - A section of the safety surface had a dip, which could lead to a trip. This dip was located near a large wooden piece of play equipment.
 - The inspector was informed that the large swing had broken and whilst it had been repaired it was fraying again.
 - A piece of large climbing equipment was worn at the base and was unstable.
2. The outdoor area was not sufficiently maintained to prevent a possible risk of cross contamination. An area under the climbing frame had a dip in which water was pooling and was not draining. There were toys in this area and staff informed the inspector that children liked to play in this section.
3. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Following a review of staff members employment in the service one staff member required an updated vetting disclosure.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that the non-compliance was brought to the Board of Directors attention and discussed. The Finance sub-committee have approved the upgrade of the playground. Quotes are currently being obtained, and a tender process will be implemented. Work will be carried out as soon as possible. As a preventive action it was stated that once the playground is completed a scheduled annual maintenance and health and safety audit will be conducted of the playground.
2. The toys stored under the climbing frame have been removed and are now stored in the shed. Staff will monitor the area for pooling water and block off area at times that it is unsafe for children to play in. This monitoring has now been added to our daily risk assessment to remind staff to check the area.
3. The Garda Vetting for the staff member in question was submitted to the Inspectorate. This was an oversight and a Garda Vetting list will be maintained in a password protected file and checked regularly to ensure this doesn't occur again.

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Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Garda Vetting disclosure

Garden risk assessment template

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted in the registered provider's action plan has addressed the non-compliance related to the Garda vetting. The interim measures for the garden are acceptable however further work is required and the non-compliance has not been rectified. Regulation 23 remains non-compliant.

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 registered provider ensured that a person trained in a First Aid Responder (FAR) course was available.

There were six staff members with FAR certification.

(2)(a) (b) The first aid equipment was conspicuous and easily accessible to staff members. The first aid equipment available provided adequate resources in the event of a first aid emergency.

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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 inspector observed staff supervising children primarily by sight throughout the period of inspection. The layout of the rooms supported staff in being able to maintain sight of the children. In the Acorn room there were three main sections of the room, separated by low barriers. Staff members played directly with the children in each area, for example children in the soft play area were using the equipment to climb, whilst children in the main area played in the home section. In the Seedlings room during free play the children had access to water play and staff members provided appropriate support at this time. Children were given a range of fruit at snack time and staff members sat with children at this time. Staff members were aware of children who required additional support and this was reflected in the supervision that was provided to children.

Each of the room had access to their own separate sanitary facilities. Staff were aware of children who used the sanitary facilities and maintained verbal contact with children at these times. Nappy changing procedures were completed on children on an individual basis, supporting effective supervision.

The children in the Acorn room slept in cots and on floor beds and were supervised during sleep. When settled staff were observed to carrying out the required 10-minute checks on sleeping children.

Due to inclement weather the children played musical games in their rooms or used the sensory room. Staff members were aware of children's play and appropriately supervised the activity and the use of the different equipment that was available in the sensory room.