

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015LK049

Name of Service: Clever Cats Preschool

Address of Service: Ardroe, Ballysimon Road, Limerick, Co. Limerick

Eircode: V94 EE06

Name of Registered Provider: Carol Lyons, Jane Frost

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 16/06/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	N/A
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office,
2nd Floor Estuary House,
Henry Street
Limerick.

Inspection undertaken by: M Riordan

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 Cats is a private pre-school offering a morning sessional service from 9.30am to 12.30pm, Monday to Friday. It accommodates up to 22 pre-school children aged between 2 and 6 years., with 15 present during the inspection. Located on the outskirts of Limerick City, the pre-school features a large playroom, a smaller room for quiet activities, and a well-equipped outdoor play area with sheltered space for all-weather outdoor activity.

Staffing

The service is jointly owned and managed by two registered providers. A 3rd staff is employed through Access and Inclusion model. All staff working at the service have completed their studies and achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. One staff has completed the LINC programme, a course designed to enhance inclusion of children with additional needs in early childhood education settings. Staff continuously engage in ongoing professional development.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 26, 28 and 29.

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 registered provider, 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) Both the registered providers were present on the day of the inspection. There was a person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered providers were present, and the staff roster indicated that one of the providers or their deputy were always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for all staff working at the service.

(b) All references were from either past employers or from other reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff working at the service. 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 not required for any staff member in the service.

(4) All staff working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 15 pre-school children under the supervision of 3 staff. The adult/child ratio was correct in the facility.

(3) The registered providers ensured that at all times the number of adults present in the service met the requirements of the regulation 11 Staffing levels.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

The service aimed to support each child's learning, development, and well-being through activities, play equipment, and positive interactions with peers and qualified staff. A healthy eating policy educated children about good nutrition, with parents providing healthy snacks and drinks. All perishable foods were safely stored in a fridge until lunchtime each day.

Children had easy access to nearby toilets, and a change of clothes was available if needed for all children.

Protective clothing was provided for messy play, and outdoor raingear ensured playtime regardless of weather.

A rest area with soft furnishings was accessible throughout the day in a quiet room for relaxation away from active play.

A well-resourced outside play area was easily accessible to the children each day. Here the children had access to climbing frames, tuff trays filled with water for sensorial play, mud kitchens, equipped with old pots, pans and microwaves and old kitchen utensils. An imaginary coffee shop was set up next to the mud kitchen area. A large walk in sand pit provided long periods of entertainment for the children.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The indoor environment was designed to be bright and welcoming, offering a range of developmentally suitable and challenging experiences for the children. There were various well-equipped interest areas, including a home

corner, construction area, library, dress-up area, puzzle area, and arts and crafts space. Play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving. Low tables and chairs were placed in the centre of the room, where children engaged in tabletop activities. Children's artwork and items of interest were displayed at eye level. The facility also featured a developed outdoor play area with a sheltered section. It included gardening and planting opportunities. The outdoor space had blackboards, benches, ride-on toys, and other equipment, making it an extension of the indoor learning environment.

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 facility had secure entry with a bell system at the front gate and door. Internal doors were locked to keep children from unsafe areas. Emergency exits and fire doors remained clear. Toys and play equipment were safe, well-maintained, and free from hazards. Cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach on high shelves. The outdoor play area was enclosed with secure railings, high walls, and bolted gates.

Infection Control:

Infection control measures were implemented. Children used correct hand washing techniques with hot water, liquid soap, and paper towels. Regular cleaning ensured all areas were maintained throughout the day. Records of children's immunisations were maintained ensuring proper procedures were followed if there were an outbreak of an infectious illness.

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(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises with the most recent service carried out on the 15th of October 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the Preschool room.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Fire drills were not carried out monthly. According to the documented record of drills the most recent drill took place on the 13th of March 2025. Regular drills are required to ensure children are familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of a fire in the building.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(a) Following the inspection, fire drills recommenced on a monthly basis. A record book is now in place to record all monthly fire drills.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the recorded fire drills were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and the evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had a current insurance certificate which outlined that adequate insurance was available for 22 preschool children to attend the service. The insurance cover commenced on the 28th of March 2025 and expired on the 27th of March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.

(b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The front gate was locked and all who entered the building were checked in by a member of staff. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.

(c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation. The gas heating system was serviced 22nd of October 2024.

(d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas. A high standard of operational hygiene was noted in the premises. The premises was rodent proofed, and a pest control company checked the facility on the 18th of March 2025.

(e) There were an adequate number of toilets and wash hand basins available at the service. A nappy changing facility was available if required.