

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK139
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Name of Service:	Park Childcare
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Address of Service:	Rhebogue, Limerick, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 P9V2
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Name of Registered Provider:	Charlene Fitzgerald
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	01/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	60	PM	58
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, Estuary House 2 nd Floor, 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
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Description of service

Park Childcare is a purpose built, full day childcare service located in Rhebogue on the outskirts of Limerick city. It offers sessional, fulltime and part-time places to preschool children of all ages. It is operational Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 5.30pm. A service for school aged children is offered each afternoon.

The service operates from a 2-storey premises. There are 4 well developed pre-school rooms located on the ground floor and 3 interconnecting pre-school rooms located on the first floor in the building. Sanitary facilities are located adjacent to each room in the service. There is a large sleep room on the ground floor. A kitchen where meals are prepared each day is located at the rear of the building.

There are 3 outdoor play areas in the service, 1 to the side of the building and 2 outdoor areas to the rear of the building. Sheltered areas outside facilitates children playing outdoors in all weather conditions.

Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge of operating the service and works full time at the facility. An assistant manager is also employed at the service. There are an additional 17 staff employed to work at the facility. Relief staff are available to cover lunch breaks, staff holidays and absenteeism when required. Staff engage in continuous professional development training and courses on an ongoing and regular basis.

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 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of operating the service and was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that this person or their deputy was always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for all staff members employed to work at the service.

(b) References were submitted by staff from either their past employers or from other reputable sources such as previous educational facilities attended.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff employed to work at the service. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, for 1 staff member, 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 available for 1 new staff member who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) On the day of the inspection all staff working directly with the children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for 2 staff members who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months. To ensure at all times the safety and wellbeing of children, all vetting procedures must be completed prior to staff taking up employment in a service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Police vetting was sourced for 2 staff members who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the required vetting 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 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 60 pre-school children under the supervision of 11 adults on the premises. The adult child ratio was correct in each room of the facility.

(2) There were 9 preschool children and 2 staff in the Wobbler Room 1.

There were 6 preschool children and 2 staff in the Wobbler Room 2.

There were 9 preschool children and 2 staff in the Junior Preschool Room.

There were 18 preschool children and 3 staff in Preschool Room 1.

There were 10 preschool children and 1 staff in Preschool Room 2.

There were 8 preschool children and 1 staff in Preschool Room 3.

Relief staff were available to replace staff while taking meal breaks. A designated person was available to prepare, cook and serve food to all children attending the service.

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 has established a comprehensive healthy eating policy to ensure all children receive a balanced and nutritious diet throughout the day. Meals and snacks were prepared on-site daily and delivered to each room individually. Upon arrival, children were offered breakfast, followed by a mid-morning snack of fruit and yogurts served at 10am. Dinner was provided at midday, and on the day of the inspection chicken curry was served for the main meal. A mid-afternoon snack consisting of sandwiches, crackers and wraps was served at 3pm. At 5pm, children received milk and cookies. Parents were kept informed of meal options through a rotating menu plan, which changed every three weeks. To promote hydration, jugs of water and cups were readily accessible to children in every room.

Sanitary facilities were conveniently located adjacent to each room. Nappy changing stations were positioned near the Wobbler rooms and the Junior Preschool room. All children's toiletries were securely stored, clearly labelled, and placed within easy reach of staff to maintain safety and organisation. Children's privacy and dignity was respected at all times, including during toilet training, which was tailored to each child's developmental stage and readiness, rather than their age.

Each room was equipped with tissues and wipes within easy reach of the children, along with foot pedal, lidded bins for the safe disposal of used tissues and paper towels. To encourage independence and organisation, each child had a clearly labelled storage space and coat hook featuring their photo for personal belongings.

For children under two years of age, a spacious sleep room was situated on the ground floor, furnished with nine high-quality standard cots. During sleep periods, children were closely monitored, and all sleep checks were documented in writing. Toddlers over two years who require sleep had access to low-level beds in the sleep room, with a staff member present at all times while children slept. Additionally, rest areas with soft seating, cushions, blankets, and soft floor coverings were available in each room to provide comfort and relaxation.

Children experienced regular changes in environment and spend extended periods outdoors. A rota ensured frequent outdoor play, and in Wobbler room 2, doors to the outside remained open, allowing children the choice to play indoors or outdoors. Sheltered outdoor areas enabled access to the playground in all weather conditions.

Physical and Material Environment

The design of each room in the service has been thoughtfully planned to foster the development of social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and interactive skills among children. The atmosphere throughout the rooms was calm, relaxed, unhurried, and supportive, enabling children to engage in a wide range of age-appropriate play activities.

In the Wobbler rooms, ample soft furnishings were provided for extended floor activities. Toys and play materials were stored in floor boxes, allowing children to independently select their preferred activities. The Junior preschool rooms and Pre-school rooms 1 and 2 featured space for various table-top activities, building and construction play areas, art and craft spaces equipped with art easels, paint pots, and brushes. Areas for messy play, sensorial experiences, and imaginative play such as toy kitchens, home corners, and dress-up clothes were available. Toys and equipment were regularly rotated, and both internal and external spaces were redesigned based on the children's preferences, interests, and abilities.

Outdoor play was prioritised, with children encouraged to be outside as often as possible and in all weather conditions. Gross motor skill development was supported through access to outdoor play equipment and climbing frames. Imaginative play was further enhanced by mud kitchens, while picnic benches and outdoor seating facilitate table-top activities outside.

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:

Adequate measures were taken at the service to ensure a safe, secure, and well-monitored environment for all pre-school children.

Controlled Access: The pre-school main entrance door was securely locked, with entry managed by the registered provider to prevent children from leaving unsupervised.

Emergency Exits: The fire exits were unobstructed and clear.

Safe Play Equipment: Toys and play materials were age-appropriate, well-maintained, and free from hazards like pinch points, crush points, or sharp edges.

Waste Disposal: Waste was kept inaccessible indoors and outdoors, with foot pedal-operated, lidded bins ensuring safe disposal.

Chemical Safety: Cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach on a high shelf.

Outdoor Safety: Exit gates were secured to prevent children from accessing unsafe areas, and supervision was continuous during outdoor play.

Infection Control:

A high standard of operational hygiene was maintained throughout the service. Tabletops were cleaned and disinfected before meal and snack time. Handwashing facilities in rooms and in all sanitary accommodations had hot water, liquid soap, and paper towels at all sinks for both staff and children.

Administration of Medication:

A policy was in place at the service to ensure safety with the administration of all medicines at the preschool. Staff were familiar with the procedures outlined in the policy.

Safe Sleep:

A safe sleep policy ensured all children were closely monitored while sleeping and all the necessary precautions were in place to keep children safe while at rest.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Garda vetting was available for all staff members. However, for 1 staff member their vetting disclosures 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'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Renewed Garda vetting procedures have been completed for the required staff member.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

A copy of the renewed Garda vetting disclosure has been forwarded to the office of the Early years' inspectorate.

Summary Comment

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

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 first aid for children was immediately available to all children attending the service if needed. There were eight staff members working at the service who completed first aid responder training. All certificates were in date. Retraining for staff was scheduled for October 2025.

(2)(a) The registered provider ensured that a suitably equipped first aid box for children was safely stored in each room of the service. The contents of these boxes were checked every month.

(b) The registered provider ensured that first aid boxes were wall mounted and available to all children in each room of the service when required.

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) Records were available to show that fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis.
- (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 having been completed in June 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous positions in the main front hall on the premises.