

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH168
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Name of Service:	Scope to Grow
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Address of Service:	Fairyhouse Road, Ratoath, Co. Meath
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Name of Registered Provider:	Catherine Hinkson
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	08/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	31
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.
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Description of service

Scope to Grow is one of two early years services owned by the registered provider. This service is conducted from a purpose-built single storey premises located in Ratoath, Co Meath. The service also provides care to school aged children. There are 6 care rooms provided on the premises namely the Nursery room, the Toddler room, Preschool room 1, Preschool room 2, Preschool room 3 and Preschool room 4. Preschool room 2 facilitated the care of school aged children on the day of inspection. A sleep room is located adjacent to the Nursery room; sanitary facilities are provided either within the care rooms or directly off the main corridor. An office, a staff room and a separate service kitchen are available. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises. A parking area is available for parents at the front of the service.

Staffing

The service employs 14 staff members including the manager and deputy manager, 2 staff members are employed in a relief capacity one of whom was present on the day of inspection.

On the day of inspection there were 10 members of staff present and working in the service including the manager and deputy manager. Eight staff members were working directly with the children and one staff member worked in the kitchen carrying out catering duties. The manager and deputy manager provided support in the care rooms when required. The registered provider is not based in the service and does not work directly with the children.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,19, 23,25 and 26; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 20. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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

(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) A named person was deputising as the designated person in charge of the service until the person in charge arrived onsite. The service manager was then the designated person in charge, with a person designated to deputise when required.

(b) A named person deputizing as the designated person was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of inspection. The service manager arrived soon after and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

A total of 14 staff files were reviewed including the files of 13 staff members who work directly with the children attending the Early Years service and for the staff member who engages in catering duties.

(2)(a) Sixteen written and appropriately validated references were available from a past employer.

(b) Twelve written and appropriately validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 14 adults whose files were reviewed. 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) International police vetting was available as required for 7 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 13 staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of inspection and remained so throughout the inspection.

- In the Nursery room there were 5 children aged between 14 months and 1 year 6 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

- In the Toddler room there were 8 children aged between 1 year 8 months and 2 years 7 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- The Preschool 1 room there were 6 children aged between 2 years 2 months and 3 years 3 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- The Preschool 2 room facilitated the care of school aged children on the day of inspection.
- In the Preschool 3 room there were 7 children aged between 3 years and 4 years 7 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Preschool 4 room there were 5 children aged between 3 years 5 months and 4 years 5 months being cared for by 1 staff member.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in 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

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic needs:

- There was a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in the care rooms of the service. Children were observed to be comfortable in exploring their environments, familiar with the routine and secure in their relationships with staff members. Staff members were responsive to children's needs and requests, demonstrated familiarity with children by recalling their preferences, and provided comfort and encouragement to children regularly throughout the day.
- The children were provided with breakfast and dinner by the service with morning and afternoon snack brought to the service from home, the afternoon snack is supplemented by a variety of sandwiches made in the service daily. Mealtimes were observed to be relaxed and sociable, with staff members taking the

opportunity to engage in child led conversations. The staff members in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms were observed to help, support and feed the children as necessary.

- In the Wobbler room and Toddler room, children’s bibs were placed on the children before they ate, and the children’s hands and faces were cleaned after they had finished their meals.
- The children’s nappies were changed at scheduled times throughout the day and more frequently as needed. Staff members were engaging with the children during nappy changing chatting and singing to the children. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the bathroom independently with discreet support and supervision provided as necessary.
- In the Nursery room the children’s sleep routines were maintained in line with their home routine and parental requests. This was evidenced on the day of inspection with children placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if they slept during mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Throughout the service staff members were observed interacting with the children in a warm, caring and sensitive manner. The staff members working in the Nursery room spoke in soft gentle tones providing reassurance and encouragement when the children seemed unsure or upset. Staff positioned themselves close to the children whilst at the same time giving the children the opportunity to explore. Staff working with the children in the remaining care rooms supported the children to interact positively with each other through modelling prosocial behaviours with children praised for being kind to each other, sharing resources and taking turns.
- A welcoming atmosphere in the service was evidenced by the staff members warmly greeting children and parents and guardians in a friendly manner on their arrival to the service. The service communicates with parents in real time through the use of a software application which documents the children’s meals, drinks, nappy changes, sleep times and activities throughout the day.
- Family photographs were on display in the care rooms which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and bridge the gap with home.

Physical and material environment:

- The learning environments of the care rooms were well defined and resourced to support the children’s curiosity and play. Interest areas included home and kitchen spaces, dress up materials, construction

areas, transport toys, arts and crafts areas and a range of tabletop resources. The area directly outside Preschool room 3 and Preschool room 4 was used as an additional play environment for the children. Staff members stated that the layout of this area was adapted with different play materials and equipment provided based on the children's particular interests, preferences and learning goals. The area is currently set up as a local veterinary clinic with pictorial representations of the clinic displayed with a selection of stuffed animals provided in addition to a cash register and a reception area for the children to enjoy.

Children were free to choose if they wanted to play within either of the care rooms or in the area set up on the corridor.

- A plentiful supply of books was provided in the care rooms and the children's language development was enhanced in each room through conversation, storytelling and singing.
- Children's artwork was displayed throughout the care rooms which assists the children in feeling valued and appreciated.
- The spacious artificial grass surfaced outdoor play area to the rear of the premises offered the children opportunities to engage in physical play with space provided for running and free movement. A low-level fence divided the area with one section used by the children attending the Nursery room and the Toddler room and the other section used by the children attending the remaining care rooms. In the section used by the children attending the Nursery room and the Toddler room there was a selection of push along toys provided for the children to use in addition to a small rocker with staff members bringing additional play materials from the care rooms for the children to use. In the section used by the children attending the remaining care rooms a permanent crawl through tunnel was available, the children enjoyed active play and were involved in running and active games. The service embraces gardening with the children and have recently been awarded a gardening award. The children proudly showed the inspectors their pumpkin and tomato plants in addition to sunflowers which they had grown.

Non-Compliance Information

1. There was a lack of natural and sensory materials in the Nursery room and the Toddler room in order to facilitate sensorial play experiences. For example, sensory type materials such as sand, rice or pasta trays were not available to the children in these care rooms. Furthermore, there were no sensory opportunities provided in the section of the outdoor area used by the children attending these care rooms on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. Sensory areas established: Dedicated sensory areas have been created in both the Nursery and Toddler rooms. These areas are stocked with a variety of materials and resources to ensure children have regular access to sensory experiences. Increased sensory activities: Educators have increased the frequency of sensory activities in both rooms. This ensures that children are consistently provided with opportunities for sensory exploration and development throughout the day.

Preventive Action

1. Management will implement regular checks to ensure that a variety of sensory equipment and materials are available and accessible to children throughout the day.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was provided.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- There were 6 standard cots available to the children attending the Nursery room. These were located in the sleep room adjacent to the Nursery room.
- Throughout the care rooms there were spaces available for children to rest during the day or take a break from play through the provision of soft mats, floor mats, child-sized sofas and cushions.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

1. In the Toddler room there were 3 children aged 22 to 23 months who were observed sleeping on stackable floor beds which is at variance to Tusla guidelines on safe sleep provisions for children under 24 months. There were sleep plans in place and available for 3 of these children, but these were completed for the use of cocoon beds only.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)(b)

- **Equipment Update:** new bed mattresses purchased, each measuring 7 cm in depth, which are available in the toddler room. This ensures that they not only meet, but exceed, the new policy requirement for all younger children.
- **Policy Review:** Sleep policy has been updated to require that all mattresses for children under 24 months of age be at least 6 cm in depth. This updated policy has been shared with all families. All staff have received mandatory training on the updated policy to ensure full understanding and compliance.
- **Individual Risk Assessments and Permission Forms:** Following the policy update, all individual risk assessments and parental permission forms have been revised to reflect the change in policy. Written permission from parents for their children to sleep in the toddler room on a mattress of 6cm in depth or greater, in line with our updated policy has been obtained.

Preventive Action

(1)(b)

Any new bedding or sleep equipment purchased will be vetted by management against the current sleep policy requirements before being used in the care rooms. Management will ensure that the sleep policy is regularly reviewed for relevance and compliance with current best practice and regulatory standards. Management will ensure that all future parental permission forms reflect this updated in policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

Receipt for the purchase of mattresses.

Updated sleep policy and training log.

Sleep plan documentation.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 20 – facilities for rest and play has been reviewed and accepted.

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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on raised shelving and in locked cupboards.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The outdoor play areas were gated and secured with walls and fencing to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and at the wash hand basins in the care rooms in the service.
- Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies. This reduced the risk of cross-infection.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being worn for each individual nappy change.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The children attending the Nursery room had access to a standard cot to sleep in on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Documentary evidence was available to confirm that fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis in the service to ensure that both staff and children are familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- A Garda vetting disclosure that was available for 1 staff member 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'.

Infection Control:

The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which increased the risk of cross contamination:

- The children attending the Nursery room and the Toddler room did not have their hands washed after they had their nappies changed or before they ate.
- Handwashing was not always carried out by staff in between nappy changing of children.
- The nappy changing mat was not cleaned using disinfectant in between nappy changing of children.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff members in the Nursery room were observed conducting the children's sleep checks at variance with the services safe sleep policy. Staff members stood at the sleep room door to conduct the sleep checks and viewed the children through the glass panel on the door. All sleeping children must be physically checked every 10 minutes to include checking the child's colour, breathing and sleeping position.

Fire Safety:

- Two children's tables and chairs in addition to play materials were stored in the corridor between the Nursery room and the Toddler room which could potentially impede staff and children's exit from the service in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

- Upon inspection, the staff member, who has been employed for three years and was initially Garda vetted, had already submitted their Garda vetting renewal application. They are currently awaiting the updated vetting disclosure from the Garda Vetting Bureau. It has been advised by the Early Childhood

Ireland Garda Vetting team that additional processing time is required for applicants who have lived in EU countries outside of Ireland (up to 10 extra working days) or the UK (up to 20 extra working days), which both are applicable to this staff member.

Infection Control:

2. All staff have been retrained on the service's established handwashing and nappy changing policies and procedures. Signage has been posted in care rooms and staff have received additional training to reinforce the importance of proper handwashing for young children for effective hygiene practices and limit the spread of infection.
3. All staff have been retrained on the service's established handwashing and nappy changing policies and procedures. Signage has been posted in care rooms and staff have received additional training to reinforce the importance of proper handwashing for effective hygiene practices and limit the spread of infection.
4. All staff have been retrained on the service's established handwashing and nappy changing policies and procedures. Signage has been posted in care rooms and staff have received additional training to reinforce the importance of proper handwashing for staff, for effective hygiene practices and limit the spread of infection. Additionally, staff have been reminded of their responsibility to use the correct cleaning products on changing mats.

Safe Sleep:

5. All staff members have received refresher training on the safe sleep policy. This training clarified the established procedure for safely monitoring children while they sleep, emphasising that staff are required to physically enter the sleep room during all sleep checks.

Fire Safety:

6. The arrangement of chairs and outdoor play materials has been reorganised. These items are now stored in designated boxes within the hall. A risk assessment has confirmed that this new storage solution does not obstruct emergency exit routes for staff or children.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. To ensure a continuous record of Garda vetting for all staff, management has established a formal procedure for all future renewals. This will include implementing a tracking system to monitor staff vetting expiration dates and initiating the renewal process a minimum of two months in advance of the

expiration date. This will allow for sufficient time to complete the process and prevent any lapse in vetting status.

Infection Control:

2. Management will ensure staff members receive regular refresher training on the handwashing and nappy-changing policies. Management will monitor compliance and ensure the correct procedures are being consistently followed.
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4. Management will ensure staff members receive regular refresher training on the handwashing and nappy-changing policies. Management will monitor compliance and ensure the correct procedures are being consistently followed.

Safe Sleep:

5. Management will ensure staff members receive regular refresher training on the service’s safe sleep policy. Management will monitor compliance and ensure the correct procedures are being consistently followed.

Fire Safety:

6. Management will ensure that outdoor play materials are stored outside in the garden each day. Management will conduct regular risk assessments to ensure emergency exits are clear at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Confirmation of application for garda vetting.

Photographic evidence.

Copy of sleep policy.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed. The non-compliance as stated in points 2-6 have been adequately addressed however as the renewed Garda vetting has not been received the regulatory requirement for noncompliance 1 under regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has not been addressed and remains outstanding.

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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times.

(2)(a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available in the service, and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

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 the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 26/06/25.

(b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms on the premises. The fighting equipment was last serviced in October 2024. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on 08/10/24.

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

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