

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY040
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Name of Service:	Clever Clogs
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Address of Service:	Kilcavan, Geashill, Geashill, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 Y670
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline O'Donoghue
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM	31
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan and F. Maher
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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Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

This service is registered as a full day care service. The age range of children that can be enrolled in the service is 1 to 6 years of age. The opening hours are from 8:00 am to 18:00 hours on a Monday to Friday basis.

The service is operated by an independent provider. A school aged childcare facility is provided.

The Early Years' Service consists of two separate single storey purpose-built premises located on the grounds of the home of the registered provider. Within the two buildings, the service provides three pre-school rooms, one sleep room and a kitchen. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available. The outdoor play area is located at the rear of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work with children. There are fourteen staff employed in the service. The designated person in charge and six adults were working directly with children on the 24 February 2026. A cook and an administrator are employed in the service and were present also.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4), (7)(a)(b)(c) - Management and recruitment.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) -Staffing levels.
- Regulation 19(1)(b) - Health, welfare, and development of child.
- Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 30(1) – Minimum space requirements.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) The designated person in charge and deputy were both available in the service.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) The staff members were aware of the management structure, the lines of authority and their roles within the service. The names of the person in charge and the deputy person in charge were displayed on the in the entrance hall in the Baby and Toddler room building.

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that one new staff member and an administrator had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 23 October 2025. Two files were reviewed, and the following was noted.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (2)
- (a)(b) Two written validated references were available from past employers or sources other than a previous employer in respect of two adults whose records were reviewed.
- (c) A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of all adults.
- The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. An in date garda vetting disclosure was available for seven staff members which required renewal since the last inspection on the 23 October 2025.
- (d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) Two staff members recently employed and working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) There were thirty-five children attending the service being supervised directly by six adults.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.
- (8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

The adults working with the children spoke and interacted with them to in a kind and respectful manner. Their first names were used; appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones were observed being used during all interactions.

The adults were familiar with each child and their personality.

Freshly prepared food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves and their drinks were within their reach throughout the day should they feel thirsty.

The staff members sat with the children at mealtimes and encouraged social interaction and conversations.

Nappy changing was completed regularly and promptly when required. It was managed in a sensitive and positive manner.

Needs led sleep was provided to any child requiring sleep in the Baby and Toddler rooms however most children requiring sleep, slept at a designated time during the day and were provided with as much time as they needed to sleep.

Older children were encouraged to be independent as they managed their personal belongings and got dressed for outdoor play assisted by adults as needed.

Transitions were well managed throughout the day by the staff members in the service. There was a predictability to the children's day, and the routine was unhurried and paced to suit the needs of the children. The children responded positively to this.

All children are given an opportunity for daily outdoor play morning and afternoon. A spacious covered area was available to the children in the Baby and Toddler rooms, and a second outdoor area was adjacent and used mainly by the children attending Pre-School 1 room.

Information was shared with parents and guardians at the drop off and collection times. Parents whose children attended the Baby and Toddler rooms were provided with a written record outlining food eaten, time nappies were changed, sleep times, activities, and other comments. Face to face meetings can be arranged for parents/guardians as necessary and email and telephone contact are used as an alternative method of contact.

Non-Compliance Information

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

1. The physical and material environment the Baby and Toddler rooms required to be reviewed as the interest areas were not presented to engage the children with an imaginative play experience to support their learning. It was observed that activities were adult led rather than enabling the children to be independent to make choices and decisions about their play. It is acknowledged that there was a good number of resources however they were stored in containers some of which did not have pictorial signage to promote independent access by the children. In the home corner in the Toddler room, there were two play kitchens and a dolls house carcass which did not have any associative toys available. This limited the play value of the area, and the children were not observed to play in it. Dress up clothes were in a container in another part of the room rather than hung up on hangers to offer the children choice. There were no sensorial materials, open ended, art and craft materials available to the children.

While it is acknowledged that there were plenty of books in the reading corners in both rooms, more single picture per page hard back books and sensory books were needed for both rooms.

The covered outdoor are adjacent to the Toddler room used by both children from the Baby and Toddler rooms required to be presented in a more planned way to support the children's play, movement, and exploration.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The deputy manager and room leader worked alongside the other daycare educators to re-organise and create a new fresh and open design in the room which allows for more positive and child led learning. The dress up corner has been revamped with all clothes on display either hanging on the door or in the basket right beside the mirror and we added bags to this section. Everything is available to the children, at their height and easy to access. All resources have been labelled so the children can easily identify what everything is. With children who are present in the baby and toddler room, educators have to provide some play led experiences and its more so guided free play where the children are given the option with what resources they want to play. We use the 'Plan-do-review rhetoric of Highscope approach'. The service manager and deputy manager have reorganised and swapped resources for the room. We have collected open-ended real-life resources for the children to play with and purchased new age-appropriate books for the rooms.

We have revamped the decking area in consultation with all staff. We have retained the decking area for gross motor skills to help support and encourage the children's physical development and to promote agility and balance.

Each quarter the deputy manager is going to review the layout of the room and apply changes that will allow for a freer flowing atmosphere that benefits the children's play and learning if needed. All suggestions by other

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

staff members will be taken on board and used. We are also searching for new child friendly storage to purchase that will help with giving the room new life and provide for a freer play area. The room leader is completing continuous professional development to continue to learn and provide the best professional practice that they can.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Seventeen photographs of the interest areas.

Certificate of completion of 'Introduction to the Quality Lead Person 2026' e-learning course for one staff member.

Summary Comment

The written response, photographic and documentary evidence submitted by the manager on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 19(1)(b). This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 entrance to the service was secured and managed by the staff to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The outdoor area in the service was secured. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Staff members in each care room advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if observed that a child may be wearing them. The staff members were aware of the potential choking risks that grapes posed when asked by the inspectors. There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed daily and reviewed by the person in charge to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap, and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored in the staff room.

Safe Sleep:

There were one sleep room with five cots available for children less than 2 years of age; low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. There was an adequate number of cots and low-level beds available to provide needs led sleep for young children. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and the required care of sleeping children including sleep room environmental temperatures and the 10-minute sleep check observations for all sleeping children which was recorded in the sleep log.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out, and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

Outings are conducted and an outings policy is in place

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

Children were observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection by the staff caring for them in their care rooms, in the outdoor area, in the sanitary areas, during the various transitions throughout the day.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider has ensured there is adequate clear floor space provided for the work, play and movement of 40 pre-school children registered to attend the service on a full day care basis see Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Room	Baby Room (ECCE1)/Snr Toddler	Toddler Room (ECCE2)	Pre-school Room (ECCE3)
Clear floor space	15.27 m ²	36.44 m ²	42.8 m ²
Number and age profile of children to be accommodated	5 children aged 1-2 years (FDC)	13 children aged 1-2 years (FDC) 15 Children aged 2-3 years (FDC)	22 children aged 2-6 years (Sessional) 19 children aged 3-6 years (FDC) 18 children aged 2-3 (FDC)

Non-Compliance Information

- Following review of the attendance record for the Pre-School room, it was noted that 11 children aged 2 years 8 months are enrolled for an ECCE service from 12:30 hours – 15:30 hours and are accommodated in the Pre-school room. This is in addition to 20 children aged 3-6 years enrolled for full day care and accommodated also in the Pre-school room. A maximum of 22 children attending on a sessional basis or 19 children attending on a full day care basis can only be accommodated in this room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- A new checklist was implemented and created by the service manager to be completed by the ECCE room leader each day to check daily numbers.

All staff have been trained in completing the new template for ECCE daily numbers. The ECCE room leader has to make sure that the new checklist is complete each day. All staff have been retrained in maintaining the adult: child ratio in the ECCE room am, pm and Full Daycare. This has been signed off by our service manager.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

Three documents

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted by the manager on behalf of the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 30(1). This will be reviewed at the next inspection.