

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY040		
Name of Service:	Clever Clogs		
Address of Service:	Kilcavan, Geashill, Geashill, Co. Offaly		
Eircode:	R35 Y670		
Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline O'Donoghue		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	23/10/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM 36
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 & C.O' Connor Hughes		
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.	Not applicable.		

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 08:00 to 18:00 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. Over the two buildings the service provides three pre-school rooms, one sleep room and a kitchen. A staff room and a school age childcare room are located in two separate prefabricated buildings. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available.

An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are eleven staff employed in the service. The designated person in charge and seven adults were working directly with children on the 23 October 2025. A cook and an administrator are employed in the service. The registered provider does not work with children since March 2025.

The registered provider was contacted and arrived at the service after the inspector's arrival and attended the closing meeting.

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:

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4), (7)(a)(b)(c) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 10 – Policies and Procedures.
- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) -Staffing levels.
- Regulation 16(1)(h), (i) – Record in relation to Pre-School Service.
- Regulation 19(1), (3) - Health, welfare, and development of child.
- Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under:

- Regulation 30(1) – Minimum space requirements.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under:

- Regulation 19(3)- Health, welfare, and development of child.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby and Toddler rooms.

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.

Additional Information

The inspection was triggered following receipt of information received to the inspectorate.

An immediate action notice in respect of Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child was issued onsite to the registered provider on 23 October 2025.

The response submitted by the registered provider on the 24 October 2025 was accepted by the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers, and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
- (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a)
The designated person in charge and deputy were 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 26 November 2024. The two files were reviewed, and the following was noted.

(2)(a)(b)
Two written validated references were available from past employers or sources other than a previous employer in respect of the two adults.

(c) A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the two 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 one staff member which required renewal since the last inspection on the 26 November 2024.

(d) Police vetting was not required as neither of the two adults had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4) The new staff member 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.

(7)(a) All staff had completed Children First training online with certificates available for review.
Evidence of mandatory training completed by staff members including first aid response (FAR), paediatric first aid (PFA), fire safety awareness and manual handling was available in the individual staff profiles.
Staff signed as having read and understood the policies and procedures of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(c)

1. It is acknowledged that there was a management structure in the service. However, the identified lines of authority, the roles and responsibility between the registered provider and the designated person in charge require to be explicit as this lack of clarity contributed to the delayed referral from the service to an external agency.

(7)(a)

2. With the exception of the staff signing the policies and procedures for the service there was no evidence of service wide staff training undertaken in any specific service policies and procedures.

(b), (c)

3. There was no evidence of staff training undertaken in the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(c)

1. A letter and job description has been issued from the service provider to the service manager/person in charge. This outlines that the service manager/person in charge has full authority in the day to day managing of the service. Full authority has been passed to the service manager/deputy manager in her absence. The letter is on file in the service.

(7)(a)

2. The service manager has issued each policy and procedure by email to staff for review and a hard copy is left in the staff room for personnel. When staff sign off sheets, they are achieving their understanding and reading off all relevant content. The service manager provides pop quizzes to check knowledge and understanding of same. The service manager offers a particular time slot to staff. This gives opportunity to question and check content of policies. A monthly person to person review will be in place to examine each block as reviewed and signed off.

(b), (c)

3. All staff now have completed their QRF training and have supplied the service manager with their certs and are now stored in their staff file. Staff who had certs already completed have provided certs to be place in their staff file. We have now made QRF training mandatory for all staff to complete. Our administration staff reminds all staff by email on upcoming training they need to complete.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Document.
2. Policy and procedure training / review checklists.
3. Thirteen certificates.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 9. This area of practice will be assessed at the next inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures, and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

following policies and procedures were selected by the Inspector and reviewed.

- Policy on Managing Behaviour.
- Policy on Accidents and Incidents.
- Risk Management Policy.
- Staff Training Policy.
- Supervision of Staff Policy.

Non-Compliance Information

The following policies did not meet the regulatory requirement due to the non-compliances outlined below:

1. Policy on Managing Behaviour

The policy on managing behaviour referenced the 2006 the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 and it did not specify that the procedures for the protection and welfare of children are managed in line with the service's safeguarding statement.

2. Policy on Accidents and Incidents

The policy on accidents and incidents did not outline the following:

How the information is recorded, documented, and stored regarding accidents and incidents.

Outline risk assessment procedures to be taken following an incident/accident occurring in the service.

3. Risk Management Policy

The risk management policy did not set out how long risk management records will be kept.

4. Staff Training Policy

The staff training policy did not set out what resources are provided for training.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The Behaviour Management Policy has been amended and references the Childcare (Pre- School Services) Regulations 2016, and a new paragraph has been added outlining the procedures for protection and welfare of children are in line with our safety statement.
2. Policy on Accident and Incident has been amended to state that accident and incidents are recorded and documented in accidents and incident logs in each room and are filed and stored away in the service providers office which is locked. These documents are stored away until the child is 21 years of age. Our policy has been updated, and after every accident and incident recorded in our accident and incident logbook a risk assessment must be carried out to prevent such accidents occurring again.
3. The service manager has amended our Risk Management Policy to state that the risk management records will be kept and stored in a safe place for 3 years.
4. The service manager has amended the staff training policy to provide information on induction training that is provided to new staff joining our service. This training requires Garda Vetting to be complete, all mandatory training such as child protection, fire safety, first aid, manual handling and QRF training to be completed. It now also states the service provider ensures that all training costs are subsidized. All policies and procedures are emailed to staff every six months to ensure re-training. Our service manager is in contact with the Offaly Childcare Committee and provides all staff with information on different training courses. It is also stated in all employees' contracts that they have to complete a minimum of two CPD training courses a year. A new system has been implemented where the service manager reviews all policies and procedures every six months and makes amendments where needed, the service deputy manager will then double check all policies and procedures to ensure the correct amendments have been made. When policies and procedures have been amended, they will be re-issued to all staff via email to retrain and be signed off when complete. Staff have been retrained in our policy on accidents and incidents with regard to carrying out risk assessments after accidents and incidents are recorded and documented to prevent such accidents occurring again. Staff have signed off on their training and will retrain every six months on all policies and procedures.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photo of new file storage area.

Behavioural Management Policy:

Accident and Incident Policy.

Risk Management Policy:

Staff Training Policy:

Summary Comment

The written response, photographic and documentary evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 10.

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) There were thirty-nine children attending the service being supervised directly by seven staff members during the inspection.

(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.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- At 11:05 am one adult in the Baby room was caring for six children aged 1-2 years, five of whom were awake and one who was asleep. Two adults were required to maintain the adult child ratio for this age group.
 - An adequate number of adults were not available at all times to care for the children attending the Baby and Toddler rooms as an adult rostered on the staff roster to work directly with the children on the day of the inspection was on leave. An adult who worked in an ancillary role in the service was rostered on the staff roster to work on the day of inspection but was on leave. The adults were not replaced on the day of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)

1. All staff have been re-trained in the baby room on maintaining the adult: child ratios of 1:5 in this age group. There had been extra support provided for the baby room to maintain a strong quality of care towards the children.

The room will be provided with a daily attendance list that will be prepared by the service manager which will ensure the correct ratios per room are being adhered to. It will be the job of the room leader to double check full attendance on the day, and that the correct children are attending their assigned room.
2. One member of staff was on leave on the day of our inspection, and an ancillary person called in and was absent on the morning of the inspection. We already had our relief staff present and, on the floor, working with the children.
3. Under normal circumstances the service manager would join and work adjacent to staff. However, on the day of the inspection the service manager felt she was required to be available during the process of the inspection. The service provider has placed an advertisement for recruitment, interviews have been taking place, and an offer has been made, and we are awaiting vetting to provide a start date. Interviews are ongoing for an extra practitioner and for relief staff that called upon if staff are indisposed. The service manager is going to start issuing a daily real time roster to reflect the staff hours and staff who are present on any given day. Roster will be double checked each day by the service deputy manager before it is issued by the service manager.

Supporting documentation submitted

Service Manager Checklist.

Recruitment advertisement.

Issued Roster.

Real Time Roster.

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 11(2). This area of practice will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis.
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h)
1. Child attendance records were maintained in the service on a daily basis.
- (i)
2. A staff roster was available for review in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (i)
1. While it is acknowledged that a staff roster was available the following was noted:
 - The staff roster was not maintained in real time.
 - The roster did not reflect the actual hours worked for some adults on the day of the inspection.
 - Break times and cover for breaks were not reflected in the staff roster.
 - The roster did not reflect the care rooms that the staff members were rostered to work in.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The staff roster will now be amended daily of any changes to staff or staff hours and there will be a daily real time roster issued by the service manager. Break times will be noted on all rosters going forward and cover will be stated for each break. All our rosters will be colour coded for each room so staff know which rooms they will be working in with the room stated at the end of each staff members hours for the week. The service manager is going to start issuing a daily real time roster to reflect the staff hours and who is present on any given day. Roster will be double checked each day by the service deputy manager before it is issued by the service manager. Breaks and cover will be noted on each daily roster and staff will know which room they are assigned to be a colour coding system a note placed beside their name on the roster.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Issued roster and real time roster.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 16(1)(i). This area of practice will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare, and development of child

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(3)
The staff members in the Baby and Toddler rooms were observed being kind and respectful towards the children in their care. First names, appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones were used during interactions with the children. The staff member in the Baby room was observed to hold, cuddle and comfort the babies.
There was emphasis on positive praise and encouragement observed during the inspection. The staff in the Baby and Toddler rooms were aware of the behaviour management policy, and the practices required to manage children's behaviours appropriate to their age and stage of development. They were able to identify prohibited care practices when asked by the inspector.

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 inspectors signed the visitors book on arrival. Daily outdoor environmental risk assessments were completed for the outdoor area.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The entrance gate and entrance door to the building where the Baby and Toddler rooms were located were not secured to prevent unauthorised entry to the service.

An immediate action notice in respect of Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child was issued onsite to the registered provider on 23 October 2025.

2. There was no documentary evidence available that daily indoor room environmental risk assessments were completed to ensure a safe play and work environment for the children and staff.
3. The chairs used in the Toddler room were not suitable for children aged 1-3 years to use for meals and tabletop activities as evidenced by the following observations:
 - At 13:17 hours it was observed that eight children aged 1-3 years were sitting on chairs that were too high for them as they were unable to place their feet on the floor for stability and balance.
 - A child aged 1-2 years was observed to fall off the chair while waiting for dinner to be served.
 - The two chairs used for the children in the Baby room did not have supportive sides to the chairs. Two children aged 1-2 years were observed to sit on chairs that were too high for them as they were unable to place their feet on the floor for stability and balance while eating their dinner.
4. The cupboard door under the sink unit was not secured to prevent the children accessing the contents which included a container of table salt and art materials.
5. There were no visibility strips on the glass patio doors in the outdoor covered area which created a potential risk of injury to a child if they failed to recognise the glass door.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The maintenance man was due in the day of our inspection to carry out any repairs we had. That evening we purchased two new bolts, a piece of wood and two new doorbells. Our maintenance man then applied the two new bolt locks on the inside of our entrance gate to provide an extra safety measure to protect our children along with blocking the hatch. We also attached new doorbells for parents to alert us of their presence. This was to ensure our service is secured from any unauthorised entry. The service manager trained all new staff on our new gate safety measure and how it is to be locked at all times and parents will ring the doorbell to alert us of their presence. All staff signed off on the training. We are exploring options to update our entrance system.

2. The service manager has now implemented a daily checklist created by our service manager to be completed by staff every morning to ensure safe play and work environments for all staff and children indoors and there is a section provided to make note of any maintenance that needs to be carried out. Notes will also be made in our maintenance book of any maintenance required. All staff have been trained in completing our new daily checklist to ensure that we provide a safe play and work environment for all staff and children indoors. Our maintenance man will be calling every two weeks from now on guided by the service deputy manager to carry out any maintenance needed. Our service deputy manager will then sign off on the maintenance books what has been carried out on each visit.
3. New chairs have been purchased for both the baby and daycare room. We purchased chairs with arms for both rooms to provide the children with extra support and balance when they are sitting. We have implemented a new system for the older children with a flower symbol on our old chairs that are of appropriate height that they can identify and know that they can use.
4. The service manager has a new daily checklist in place that allows for the checking of cupboards and other safety features in all the rooms in our service. This check list provides the staff with the opportunity to report any risks or maintenance works that need to be carried out in a quick and timely manner.
5. Visibility strips were purchased placed on the windows of the patio door to prevent any potential risks of injury to children if they failed to recognise or see the glass door. The service manager has new daily checklist in place that allows for the checking of windows and doors and other safety features in all the rooms in our service. This check list provides the staff with the opportunity to report any risks or maintenance works that need to be carried out in a quick and timely manner.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Gate Training /Maintenance person letter /Equipment Receipt / Photo of gates / Daily checklist training /New Daily Checklist.
2. New Daily safety checklist / Daily Safety Checklist training.
3. Receipts and photographs of new chairs purchased.
4. Photo of new child locks / New Daily Safety Checklist / Training for new daily safety checklist.
5. Photo of visibility strip.

Summary Comment

The written response, photographic and documentary evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23. This area of practice will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

- The supervision of the maximum number of nineteen children aged 1-3 years observed to be attending the Baby and Toddler rooms was compromised on the day of the inspection. This was due to overcrowding of children aged 1-3 years in the Toddler room. There were too many children in a mixed age group with increased care needs in this room, and this had an impact on the care of the children as evidenced by the following observations:
 - At 11:05 it was observed that a child was settling into the Baby room until 11:32. As a result, another child aged 1-2 years was moved from the Baby room to the Toddler room during this time to accommodate this child.
 - At 11:03 a child was observed sitting alone at a table while finishing snack in the Toddler room. One adult was cleaning the table and sweeping the floor after snack while another adult was encouraging the other thirteen children to sit in the cosy corner for a story while the clean-up was completed.
 - There was no adult available to carry out physical sleep observations as part of the required care of sleeping children. From 12:41 – 13:00 the inspector did not observe any physical checks being consistently completed on four sleeping children in the sleep room adjacent to the baby room. It is acknowledged that there was a viewing panel on the dividing wall between the baby room and the sleep room. Sleeping children must be physically observed every 10 minutes to ensure their safety.
 - At 13:17 a child was observed to place their head on a table and fall asleep at the table while waiting for dinner to be served. Sleep facilities were not available in the service until the Toddler room was transitioned to a sleep room after dinner was finished.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A new settling period plan has been implemented for the parents by the service manager. This is also double checked by the deputy manager. This outlines a more descriptive plan for child settling. All daycare staff are now trained and receive a handover sheet which states the details of all the new children starting. The staff have been retrained in regard to meal times, to ensure that the children start and finish together. The service manager has designated a staff member to be in charge of nap times and to check the children every ten minutes by entering the sleep room and observing the children. All staff have been retrained on safe sleeping procedures. Each room in daycare have their own logbooks and children are physically checked every 10 minutes and are signed by the designated person.

The service manager has designated the ancillary staff member to clean up after mealtimes which allows for the practitioners to stay and care with the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. New settling in form. / Mealtime training. / Sleep logs.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 27. This area of practice will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.