

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015TY016
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Caterpillar's Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Rearcross, Newport, Co. Tipperary
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<b>Eircode:</b>	V94 ED95
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Grainne Harte
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	16/10/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	28	PM	21
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L McGeeney and B Fraher
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors
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### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

This full day care service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years old. A registered school aged service is also provided. The service operates Monday to Friday, 7am to 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour session operated under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) between 9.15am and 12.15pm, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. Places in the scheme are funded for eligible children.

The service is operated from a single story, detached premises in the village of Rearcross in north Tipperary which was converted from commercial premises for the purpose of operating an early years service. The premises consists of a kitchen, sleep room, sanitary accommodation areas and four activity rooms, three of which are interconnected. The service also has enclosed outdoor play areas to the back and side of the premises. Three of the four activity rooms were in use on the day of inspection.

This is one of five early years services operated by the registered provider under the name 'Caterpillars Childcare', with the other pre-school services in County Tipperary being Caterpillars Childcare, Newport and Caterpillars Childcare, Killeen.

### Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service on a daily basis but is available to call on when required. The service manager is the person in charge on a daily basis and works directly with the children. There were five staff and one third level childcare student present in the service on the day of inspection. Four staff and the student worked directly with the children while the fifth member of staff was responsible for catering. Staff who worked with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

### 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(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 15, 19(1)(b), 20, 21, 22, 24(1), 25 and 26.

however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation xx. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation(s) within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of the Pre-School Child.

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

*(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

The staff files of the six staff employed in the service and the childcare student on work placement were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the six members of staff and the childcare student.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of two members of staff and the childcare student.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and the childcare student. Relevant records were held on file. The service had a system in place to ensure that all staff and students are re-vetted on a three yearly basis, in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

(4) The staff who worked directly with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications. The childcare student was in their third year towards a level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education and was present in the service in a learning capacity.

## 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.*

*(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*

*(a) a sessional pre-school service, and*

*(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*

*(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 3 staff working with 28 children aged between 2 and 6 years old across three rooms on the morning of the inspection. There were six children aged 2 – 3 years in the Toddler room with 1 member of staff and 22 children aged 2.5 – 5 years old between the Junior and Senior pre-school rooms with two members of staff. Another member of staff arrived to work in the Senior Preschool room at 10.30am. The student was also present but not included in the adult to child ratios, neither was the member of staff responsible for catering. There were three staff working with 21 children aged between 2 and 6 years old in the afternoon. Staff relieved each other for breaks when the morning session was ended, while ensuring that the required ratios were maintained in the service.

(2) and (4) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the minimum requirements for the duration of the inspection.

(8)(a) At least two staff were present in the service while it was in operation.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and
- (c) an authorised person.

#### Compliance Information

(1) A sample of ten registration forms were reviewed as part of the inspection process. The registration forms were found to contain the required elements as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.

(3) The registration forms were available on the premises to be viewed by an authorised person as required.

### 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 following care practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children attending the service:

##### Basic Needs of the Children

The staff remained with the children during meal times providing encouragement to try foods and supervision. Staff sat at some tables, interacting with the children and providing assistance when needed to open food items. The children sat together to eat and drink, when a relaxed social environment was apparent. Children were given as much time as they needed to eat and communicate with friends. The staff were readily available to provide assistance if required.

Children who required assistance with toileting were promptly aided by staff and nappy changing was completed regularly in a private and dignified way with hygiene maintained. Staff remained near the door of the bathroom when it was in use to be available to assist if needed. Children that were toilet training were encouraged in a positive way to use the bathroom.

Handwashing was encouraged and facilitated following toileting and before meals. Children were seen to be reminded of the need to handwash during the day.

Children were communicated with throughout the day through conversation and play with staff and friends.

##### Supporting relationships around children

A Key worker system was in place in the service with named staff responsible for creating relationships with a designated group of children and updating parents on a daily basis using a software application designed for that purpose. This encouraged the development of secure relationships for children. Staff stated that parents and

guardians could speak to the key worker or person in charge about any concerns they may have and this was seen in a positive interaction with a parent at collection time.

In the three care rooms in use on the day of inspection, the adults were noted to interact with the children in a caring and patient manner.

The children were gently encouraged and supported by the staff to be inclusive of others in play.

Children were seen having the option to opt in or out of play and their choices were respected.

Staff were noted to take an interest in children's activities.

### Physical and material environment

The staff had been teaching children about hedgehogs and had completed artwork about hedgehogs. They also watched a video on hedgehogs on the day of inspection.

## 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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children had access to both indoor and outdoor environments during the day. Three of the four activity rooms in the service were in use on the day of inspection: Toddler room, Junior Preschool room and Senior preschool room, which were connected to each other via doors on either side of the middle room (Junior preschool). The Baby room was closed on the day of inspection as all children present were aged over two years

old. Each of the activity rooms was bright and well ventilated. The rooms were laid out in a manner which supported the children to play and explore independently according to their own interests and abilities. There were well defined interest areas, such as imaginative play areas, art and craft areas, construction areas, tabletop and seating areas and relaxation areas, including a loft space in the Senior preschool room.

(b) There were cosy seating and relaxation areas in each room where the children could sit and chat with friends or relax with a book during the day. There was a sleep room off the Baby room with accommodation for two children to sleep in standard cots at any one time. This space was not required on the day of inspection as none of the children who required a sleep during the day used a cot. The Toddler room became a sleep room for the children aged over 2 years old, who required a sleep, in the afternoon after dinner time. Camp beds and floor beds were laid out on the floor for the children who were provided with individual sheets and blankets.

(3)(a) There were two outdoor play areas available to the children: the main one was to the side of the premises and the second one was behind the Baby room, for the exclusive use of the children from the Baby room. As the Baby room was not in use on the day of the inspection, neither was this second outdoor play area. The main area was a well-developed outdoor play environment, enclosed by fencing and gates, with artificial grass on the ground. The outdoor space had both open and roofed areas which enabled the children to play outdoors in all weathers.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

An adequate amount of well-maintained child sized tables and low-level plastic and timber chairs were provided for the children to use indoors and seating was also accessible in the outdoor play space. Seating was also available for staff.

The care rooms were suitably resourced with age-appropriate interest items which were stored in accessible areas for the children at their eye level. Examples of these were timber puzzles, bricks, books, playdough, dress up costumes, dolls, buggy, toy kitchen, trucks and builders work station.

Art and crafts supplies were available for use. Currently the art theme was Autumn, Halloween and hedgehogs.

The outdoor play area comprised of a timber bus with seating, climbing area and a playhouse with a slide. The area also had a herbal and edible flower planting area. In the covered outdoor space there was a large interest area. Play spaces and equipment included a water play area, music play area, indoor playhouse, covered sand box, ride on toys and a mud kitchen. This area was also furnished with wall mounted heaters for the winter.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy. The two-week menu plan was displayed on the entrance door where parents could read it. Hot meals and snacks were prepared in the kitchen of the premises by a member of staff dedicated to catering. Children had the option of bringing a packed lunch from home to eat at the morning break. Most of the children who were attending the ECCE session and would be going on to school in the next 1 to 2 years brought a packed lunch. All other meals and snacks were provided by the service.

The children had access to drinking water during the day and at meals.

The food provided by the service during the inspection included the morning snack of cream crackers, yoghurts and blueberries and dinner of bolognaise sauce served with pasta or mashed potatoes. Other foods observed being eaten on the day of the inspection included: fromage frais, yoghurts, bread sticks, fruits juices and smoothies, rice cakes, crackers, sandwiches, fresh fruit such as bananas, strawberries, grapes and mandarins, dried fruit such as raisins and pureed fruit.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*

*(a) no person other than-*

*(i) pre-school child attending the service,*

*(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*

*(iii) an employee, or*

*(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*

### Compliance Information

(1) Children's attendance was recorded using a software application (app) designed for that purpose. Each child was check in by staff at their arrival and departure. Staff informed the inspector that two staff members may check in/out together at busier times. Staff were seen using the app to check out children.

(3)(a) On arrival to the service, the doors were locked with a coded lock to stop unauthorised access. Staff met any visitors to the service before allowing them access to the premises, if appropriate.

## 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) There were two staff members with up to date first aid response (FAR) certification and one of these was consistently available to the children. Four other staff members also had paediatric first aid certification.

(2)(a) Three well stocked first aid boxes and an AED were available on the premises.

(b) The first aid supplies were accessible at all times, should they be 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 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 which demonstrated the completion of regular monthly fire drills was available. The last recorded fire drill was undertaken on 30 September this year.

(b) Maintenance records indicated that the firefighting equipment was serviced during May 2024 and smoke alarms in June 2024.

(4) A fire procedure plan pertaining to the layout of the premises was displayed near the exit door.