

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY017
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Name of Service:	Caterpillars Childcare (Newport)
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Address of Service:	Coole, Newport, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	V94 EP44
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Name of Registered Provider:	Grainne Harte
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM	50
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney and J Dennehy
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Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

This full day care service was established in 2006 to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided.

The service operates Monday – Friday, 7.30am – 6pm for 51 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour session, funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children, which operates Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 12.30pm for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from a converted residential premises in a rural area near the town of Newport in north Tipperary. The premises consists of the main building which is single-storey, attached to which is a single-storey modular building. Within these buildings there are six activity rooms, sanitary accommodation areas, sleep room, kitchen and storage areas. Additional modular buildings are used at the back of the premises to provide an office, sanitary accommodation and laundry.

This is one of four services operated by the registered provider in Co Tipperary and Co Laois, the other services being: Caterpillars Childcare, Rearcross; Caterpillars Childcare, Killeen and Caterpillars Childcare, Ballaghmore ELC.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service in a management role and provides relief in the rooms when required. There are eight staff employed to work directly with the children, seven of whom were present in the service on the day of inspection. There are four additional staff employed in quality assurance, cleaning, catering and management.

Staff who work directly with the pre-school children hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education.

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), 16, 19(1)(a), 25, 26 and 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulations 23 and 30. 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 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

(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 registered provider and 12 other members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the 13 members of staff.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of five members of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. The service had a process in place to ensure that all staff were re-vetted on a three-yearly basis in line with the requirements of the early years inspectorate.

(d) Police vetting had been carried out in respect of staff who had lived outside the state, as adults, for a period exceeding six consecutive months and relevant documents were kept on file.

(4) The registered provider and eight members of staff who worked directly with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and educations at levels 5, 6, 8 or 9 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.

(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) On the morning of the inspection there were 62 children being supervised by 8 staff across 6 rooms as follows:

- there were 9 children aged between 12 and 18 months old in the Baby room with 2 staff,
- there were 9 children aged between 2 and 3.5 years old in the Clubhouse with 2 staff,
- there were 20 children aged between 3 and 5 years old in the Senior Pre-school rooms with 2 staff.

In the afternoon the number of children and staff in the Baby room and Clubhouse were the same as in the morning and there were 32 children in the Junior pre-school rooms with 4 staff.

(2) and (4) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the minimum requirements in the Baby room, Clubhouse and Senior pre-school room in the morning and in the Baby room, Clubhouse and Junior pre-school room in the afternoon.

Staff involved in quality assurance, catering and cleaning were present in the service but not included in the adult to child ratios.

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

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the morning of the inspection there were 24 children aged 3 – 5 years old and 2 staff between the 2 Junior pre-school rooms. The minimum number of adults required for this age group, while attending an ECCE session, was 1 for every 11 children, therefore, there was an inadequate number of staff working directly with the children in the Junior pre-school rooms at that time. It is acknowledged that staff explained the rationale for working out of ratio on the day was to accommodate the needs of two of the children, however, additional staff were required in the rooms to meet the minimum requirements.

The registered provider was present on the afternoon of the inspection to provide relief to staff for their breaks, however, as the only member of staff available to provide relief on the day of inspection this is insufficient to meet the needs of the service. There should be sufficient staff to provide relief for staff breaks and to support activities that required staff to leave their rooms such as nappy changing and settling babies for sleep.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider provided the following rationale, in total in Newport they have four preschool groups. On the day preschool group one and two were over ratio by one child each and preschool group three and four were under ratio by one child each. In total as per ratio they had 44 children in preschool with 4 preschool teachers. Up to recently the two additional children between group one and two were part of group three and four, which meant every preschool group was within ratio, they were only moved because they were not settling and after review and at their parent request, the service moved them to group one and two. The service has since spoken to a number of parents to ask if they would be willing to allow them to move their child to group three and group four, which they have agreed. This would mean the service would be operating within ratio requirements. The service explained to parents that from time to time they may need to move children between preschool groups to remain in ratio, but they will try and only do this as a last measure to avoid disruption and discomfort to the children.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The records required to be held by the service as detailed in the above regulation parts (a) to (k) were available in the service as follows:

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and employees were recorded in the staff file for each member of staff.
- (b) – (g) These details were available in the ‘Parent’s Handbook’ and on the services website.

- (h) and (i) These records were maintained on an electronic application designed for use in pre-school services.
- (j) Medication forms were used to record the administration of medication. Signed parental consent was sought prior to medications being given to a child.
- (k) A book with triplicate pages, designed for the purpose, was used for recording any accidents or incidents that occurred in the service.
- (3) The records were available for inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

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 was observed on the day of inspection through direct observation, review of records and discussions with staff.

Basic needs

The children enjoyed freedom of movement within their rooms and in the outdoor play areas. The older pre-school children also benefitted from a change of environment in the afternoons when they moved from the modular buildings, where they spent the morning, to the Junior pre-school rooms.

Children could rest and relax during the day in cosy seating areas in each room and in the covered outdoor play areas. Sleep facilities, which included: a sleep room, cots, floor beds, camp beds and individual bed linen, were available for the children who required a sleep during the day.

Children were supported to become independent with self-care skills such as feeding themselves, using the toilet, washing their hands and faces, dressing for the outdoors, caring for their belongings and tidying up after themselves. The staff helped the children to develop these skills, suitable to their age and stage of development.

The children had access to drinking water at all times throughout the day. Their individual drink bottles were accessible to them in their rooms and cups of water were served at meal and snack times.

Supporting relationships

The children were cared for by the same team of staff each day, many of whom had been working in the service for many years and had known the children from their infancy. This helped to create a relaxed and happy atmosphere that was evident on the day of inspection. The children were observed to enjoy their interactions with a range of staff who worked in the service which included the staff in their rooms as well as the chef, managers and other ancillary staff.

The children were given many opportunities to make choices during the day, in particular regarding what activities and materials they wanted to explore and engage with. At mealtimes they were given choices such as whether they wanted cheese on their pasta bolognaise or whether they liked their foods mixed or separated. Staff were observed to be supportive of the children and respectful of their individual needs.

Staff communicated with parents daily through an electronic application which enabled the sharing of information about their child including what they had eaten, the activities they engaged in and when they had slept as well as photos of their child. Parents were met by a member of staff at arrival and departure times, when they could talk to staff and the service published a monthly newsletter with information about what had been happening in the service that month such as birthdays, themes and special events.

Equipment and materials

The children had access to a wide range of toys, materials and equipment both indoors and outdoors. The staff in each room tailored their rooms to the needs and interests of the children currently attending. For example, the Baby room had many sensory resources that had been made by the staff which engaged the youngest children in the service. Resources such as mobiles, fairy lights and umbrellas filled with balloons and suspended from the ceiling provided visual interest to the babies, especially when they were relaxing in recliner chairs and looking upwards or when carried by staff.

The children’s artwork was displayed on the walls in each room and reflected the themes and interests of the children. The children in the Junior pre-school room were excited to talk about and show their artwork related to snakes, recently created in honour of Chinese New Year.

Interest areas in each room included table-top activities and dining areas, cosy seating areas, home corner/imaginative play area, reading/book area, art and mark making area, manipulative materials and puzzles area, construction area, small world area and sensory play areas. There was a storage room in the main building where a range of resources, especially sensory materials, were available for use by all of the rooms.

Outdoor equipment provided opportunities for the children to move and challenge themselves physically through climbing, balancing, riding on or in wheeled vehicles, running, sliding and swinging. The outdoor environments also provided the children with sensory experiences such as water and sand play.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

The following was observed on the day of inspection which may pose a risk to the health, safety and welfare of the children:

1. There were three space saver cots in use in the sleep room. On request from the inspector, the registered provider checked the manufacturer’s instructions as to the age range recommended to use these cots, which was 0 – 12 months old. As all of the children currently using the cots for sleep time were aged 12 – 18 months old, these cots were not suitable for use. It is acknowledged that the registered provider has stated that the cots have since been removed and replaced by standard cots.
2. There was a baby walker in use in the baby room on the morning of the inspection. This piece of equipment is not allowed to be used in early years settings due to the potential risk of injury they pose to children. It is acknowledged that the baby walker was removed from the service immediately after the inspector identified it as a risk.

Infection Control:

3. The cots in the sleep room were positioned in a manner that meant many of the cots were directly adjacent to at least one other cot. This was at variance to infection control requirements which state that cots or sleep mats must be separated by a gap of at least 50cm.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. Per the inspection report the 0 to 12 month cots have been removed and replaced by standard cots. One white cot will remain in the room for a baby who is under 12 months of age. The service will monitor to ensure as children turn 12 months that they are placed in a cot for children from 12 months of age upwards and that white cots will only be used for children under 12 months of age.
2. The baby walker was removed from the baby room immediately.

Infection control:

3. The existing space between the cots has been increased to 50cm.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

Photographs of the sleep room with five standard cots and one cot for 0 – 12 months old was received by the early years inspectorate on 17 March 2025.

Infection control:

Photographs of the new layout of the sleep room were received by the early years inspectorate on 17 March 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider and another member of staff held current certification in first aid response (FAR) valid until 19 February 2026. There were nine members of staff who held current certifications in paediatric first aid valid until 1 May 2026.

(2)(a) There were several suitably equipped first aid boxes in the service plus additional supplies available to restock the first aid boxes as required.

(b) The first aid boxes were available if required by a child while attending the service.

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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 20 January 2025.

(b) There was a written record to the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced annually, most recently on 29 May 2024 and 28 November 2024 respectively.

(4) There were notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed on the walls throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had current insurance cover for a full day care service with up to 75 children at any one time, valid until 27 March 2025.

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.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) and (2) On the afternoon of the inspection the children from the Senior preschool rooms, who attended on a part time or full day care basis, moved across to the Junior pre-school rooms to facilitate the school age children who were arriving and who used the Senior pre-school rooms in the afternoon.

At 1pm there were 32 children aged between 3 and 5 years old present in the Junior pre-school rooms which measured a total of 60.68m². The space requirements for the children were 2.3m² per child, or 73.6m² in total. Therefore, there was insufficient space available to children in the Junior pre-school rooms in the afternoon.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The afterschool spaces consist of the use of one preschool room (room 4), enclosed outdoor play space connected to the building and our play bus dedicated to afterschool. The afterschool children should not have been using room 3 which is for full day care children alongside room 1 and 2 as well as the smaller play space connected to preschool full day care room 2.

The team has now been reminded of the correct use of rooms and the importance of the space requirements associated with same.

The service will ensure correct rooms are being used for their designed function to adhere with space requirements.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016