

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY055
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Name of Service:	Nicoles Country Childcare Limited
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Address of Service:	Skehana, Roscrea, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E53 DX97
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nicole Joyce
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	15/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary, E45A099
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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).

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Description of service

This full day care service was established in 2015 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 is operated Monday – Friday, 7am – 6pm, for 50 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 between 9.30am and 12.30pm for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from converted farm buildings adjacent to the registered providers residence, in a rural area between the towns of Roscrea and Templemore, in north Tipperary. The activity room and sleep facilities used by the children under 2 years old are located in the front section of the residential premises. The service is predominantly an outdoor service with indoor spaces available for use throughout the day as well as during very inclement weather. The indoor spaces include a dining room and kitchen area, ‘the shed’ indoor activity room for older children, the baby and toddler room and sanitary accommodation areas. There is also a wooden cabin in the outdoor area that provides a sheltered play room. The grounds to the front of the premises have been developed into three outdoor play spaces: the main outdoor area, a smaller area for younger children and an area mainly used by the school age children.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service, with up to five other members of staff, including staff employed to work with the school age children and staff responsible for catering, transport and maintenance. All staff who work directly with the children hold 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:

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- 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(1)(2)(4), 11(1)(2), 15(1)(3), 16(1)(3), 19(1)(a), 23 and 25(1)(2).

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Preschool Child. As there were no children under three years old present in the service for the inspection the room used by the younger children was not inspected.

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who could deputise in her absence.

(b) The registered provider or her deputy were available in the service while it was in operation.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that there were no new staff members employed since the previous inspection.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for each person working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources such as previous schools and colleges.

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(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for six staff members including the registered provider. In the case of one staff member, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting documentation was available for two staff working in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications for the staff working with pre-school children were available on file demonstrating that they held a qualification at level 5 and above 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the morning of the inspection there were 2 staff working with 16 children aged between 3 and 5 years old, attending on a full day care basis. A third member of staff was present but not counted in the ratios as they were involved with food preparation and cooking.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the recommended requirements throughout the day.

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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) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample size of 10 completed registration forms were reviewed as part of the inspection process. The information required to be kept in writing in respect of each child as detailed under parts (a), (b), (c), (d), (f) and (g) of this regulation was available in respect of each child.

(3)(a) The records were available on the premises for inspection by an authorised person.

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Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The following required information was not maintained in writing in relation to each child:
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;
 - (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.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

New updated parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency was forwarded to parents for completion and returned. Record of immunisations were also forwarded by parents. The registration form was updated to include all the required information.

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;*

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(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 maintained in writing in the service, as detailed under parts (a) – (k) of this regulation, were available.

(3) The required records were available on the premises for inspection 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 and freedom of choice both indoors and outdoors. The children spent a large portion of the day playing outdoors but had the choice to move indoors whenever they wanted to. The staff responded to the children's needs and interests and made changes to planned activities according to the children's level of engagement. For example, while some children were listening to a story inside, a small group of children went outside with the registered provider to explore. This activity attracted the attention of all of the children so the story was deferred to a later time and everyone went outside.

The children enjoyed regular meals, snacks and drinks throughout the day. The dining room adjacent to the kitchen was set up with bench seats and tables joined together to form a long table where all of the children could

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sit together, enjoying conversation and laughter while they ate. The children brought a packed lunch to eat in the morning and the service supplied a cooked meal in the middle of the day and another snack in the evening. The children brought their own drink bottles that were refilled with water as required and children were offered drinks of water or milk with their meals. Staff sat with the children while they ate and gave assistance as required.

There were cosy areas available in 'the shed' and in the wooden cabin for the children to rest and relax in during the day. There were also cots available for the days when infants were present and required a sleep.

Supporting relationships

The staff were observed to engage positively with the children, such as the welcome greeting they gave children on arrival and the gentle reminders to be respectful of each other's space or 'personal bubble'. The staff were observed to respond to the needs and interests of the children. For example, when the children became curious about where rabbits lived they all went outside to see if they could find evidence of any rabbits in the garden and the children were given carrots to leave in the places they thought the rabbits might find them. This project excited the children and rose out of a discussion about the Easter bunny.

The staff were aware of the children's lives outside the service and the impact that had on each child. For example, the staff were supportive of one child who was easily upset on the day of inspection and needed support and minding.

Parents were invited to the service for special events such as the Valentines day tea in February where the children presented each parent with a rose. Photos of the day were displayed on the wall in 'the shed'. On the day of inspection, the children were rehearsing their acts for their end of year celebration that parents would be invited to and which would mimic a 'Scór' competition. The children practiced a group song, figure dancing, recitation and solo singing in preparation.

The children were given special responsibilities each day which helped to develop their skills and give them a sense of purpose and pride. The roles included: being the line leader when lining up to wash their hands; being responsible for handing out the paper towels and dispensing the liquid soap; washing and rinsing the recyclable waste after meals and putting it in the recycling bin; collecting the post from the post man; or being the playground monitor, quiet monitor or 'gentle hands' monitor.

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Physical and material environment:

The children had access to a wide variety of defined interest areas and play resources both indoors and outdoors. 'The Shed' was a large room with a high ceiling that was set up with tables and chairs for table-top activities, a 'Space exploration station' with planets, stars and rocket ship, arts and crafts materials, home corner and dolls, cosy area, games area and construction materials. The covered area between the outdoor play area and 'the shed' was set up with special interest activities on two tray tables. On the day of inspection one table had coloured dinosaurs, tweezers and sorting bowls while the other table had coloured water, droppers, cups and lidded test tubes.

The main outdoor area was a large, enclosed space, secured with fencing and gates. This area had a variety of ground surfaces: gravel paths, concrete paths, grass and bark mulch surfaces and bare soil surfaces under and around the mature trees. There were natural tunnels and screens created by flowering shrubs and trees. A forest area in one corner contained mature evergreen trees with some horizontal branches used for climbing or sitting on. There was a mud kitchen area, a raised playhouse and slide, climbing and swinging equipment, the cabin playhouse and lots of ride-on vehicles such as tractors, scooters and balance bikes.

The children wore rubber boots and wet weather trousers and jackets over their clothing to stay dry and warm. The outdoor clothing was worn throughout the day of inspection as the day was changeable and the children moved frequently between indoor and outdoor spaces.

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 service was located in a lane from a country road which did not have a large volume of traffic. The children entered the premises through a gate from the parking area into the front yard and then a second gate between the yard and the outdoor play area.

Children could see into the cooking area of the kitchen from their dining area but were prevented from accessing it by the use of a fitted timber gate.

Hot water for hand washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C. Hot water was 37°C on the day of inspection.

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The registered provider recently purchased an AED for use by the service and the local community. An electrician was due to come this week to install it on the wall of the garage, where it would be easily accessible.

Infection control:

The service had an infection control policy. Good hand-washing practices were observed on the day of inspection. Children lined up before each meal so that each child could wash their hands under staff supervision. Recyclable materials were stored in a lidded bin after being washed first. Handwashing was also carried out after using the toilet and after messy play.

Administration of medication:

The service had a policy on the administration of medication. Signed parental consent was sought prior to medication being given to a child while attending the service.

Safe sleep:

The service had a safe sleep policy. Children were observed while they slept and a record was maintained of sleep checks.

Fire safety:

Fire escape routes were kept clear of obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. Garda vetting disclosures for one member of staff was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

Garda vetting reapplied for and received. Review of Garda vetting for staff will be carried out on the 1st week of January every year and re-applied for within a three year period.

Summary Comment

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

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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 who held current certification in first aid response (FAR) and another member of staff with current CPR certification.

(2)(a) There were three first aid boxes for the service which were suitably equipped.

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