

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD096		
Name of Service:	Waterford Childcare Centre		
Address of Service:	Unit 607 Northern extension, Industrial estate, Waterford City, Co. Waterford		
Eircode:	X91 PT10		
Name of Registered Provider:	Marian Walsh		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Dates of Inspection:	18/03/2026		
Date 2 of Inspection:	19/03/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	111	PM 66
Day 2	AM	121	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Office, Cork Road, Waterford City.		
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw N. Thornton		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
Authority to Inspect			
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).			
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable		

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Waterford Childcare Centre is a community service based in a purposely built premises in an industrial park on the outskirts of Waterford City. There are nine care rooms with adjacent sanitary areas, a kitchen, staff rooms, and office spaces. There are three outdoor areas for the various age groups. The service is registered to care for up to 131 children aged 0 to 6 years of age. It operates from 07:45 to 17:45 five days a week. The service offers full day care, part-time care, and sessional care. The service offers school-age care also.

Staffing

There are 61 staff employed in the service, including management, care staff, office staff, community employment (CE), and auxiliary staff. The person in charge and the deputy person in charge is available throughout the day

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:

Regulation 9– Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 17 – Information for Parents;

Regulation 19 - Health Welfare and Development of Child;

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child;

Regulation 24 – Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance;

Regulation 27 – Supervision.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance, as a result, the scope of the inspection included the junior baby room, the senior baby room, the junior preschool, and the senior preschool.

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 during 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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

(9)

(1)(a)(b)(c) The service had a designated person in charge and a person to deputise if required. There was a clear management structure with the staff names and positions displayed in the service.

(2) Following a review of previous inspections, information available on the day and a discussion with the person in charge, it was determined that 10 new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection and 6 students were completing their educational work placement programme. A total of 16 files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting was available. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.

(7)

The management team evidenced support and supervision of staff on an ongoing basis. They described how they regularly check in with staff individually and have planned training days. Staff described how they have engaged in continuous personal development (CPD) and demonstrated how each team is informed of upcoming training or workshops. The service uses an online application system to inform staff of training opportunities. Management also schedules non-contact time away from the children during the day to facilitate staff to meet with management or update online training if required.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(a)(b) The required validated references for six adults were not available to the inspector.

(d) Documents reviewed demonstrated that the required police vetting was not available for two staff members.

(3)

On inspection of the staff files, vetting procedures, including the acquisition of Police vetting and the assessment of references were not thoroughly conducted prior to some staff being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to children in the service.

(4)

On review of a previous non-compliance in March 2025, the qualification records of seven staff members were reviewed, five staff had successfully achieved the required award. However, while it is recognised that two staff members were studying for a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework, they did not hold the required qualification on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that the required validated references are now on file. International Police vetting has been received and documentation submitted demonstrated the second adult did not require police vetting. The personnel file checklist has been updated to include a prompt to check new staff's C.V.'s for the possible requirement of police vetting. The registered provider will ensure this check list will be used to ensure all documentation is in place prior to new staff joining the team.

Documents submitted demonstrated that staff members were continuing their training and were not included in the adult child ratio until they had reached at least a Level 5 major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the required validated references were submitted.

A copy of Police vetting was received.

A detailed C.V. was received indicating that police vetting was not required.

An updated list of modules completed by staff in training.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection under 9(2)(a)(b) and 9(3). While it is acknowledged that two staff are in training, this remains underway and as such compliance with regulation 9(4) has not yet been achieved.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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)(2)

During the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children. On day 1, there were 36 staff with 111 children and on day 2, there were 38 staff with 121 children. The registered provider and person in charge were observed to support staff and children where required during the day.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

Management and staff described how children and families are introduced to the service. They described how initially parents receive a parental handbook introducing them to the service and outlining the necessary policies and procedures. Included in the registration form is an enrolment booklet with more detailed information. Parents then have individualised access to the online application where all the relevant policies are available to them.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(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

(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)(a)(b)

The inspectors observed the following:

The children's food was provided by the on-site chefs and was freshly prepared on the day. At 11:55 the Junior preschool children were served their dinner of cottage pie and vegetables, the staff member described how they also offer the children a choice of pasta as some children do not like the consistency of mashed potatoes. There were additional portions available for children if they required second helpings. Dinner time in the service was noted to be a sociable occasion giving children the opportunity to chat with each other and staff while eating.

Children were not rushed to finish eating and staff were observed to sit with the children.

Children's independence was fostered, for example, once they were finished eating, they were observed to scrape their plates and return them to the trolley and get their plate of sliced apple for desserts.

Once dinner was finished three children helped the staff by sweeping the floor with dustpans and brushes. Staff were overheard complimenting them on their good work. In the Junior Toddler room once dinner and clean-up were over the children were observed to set their chairs in two lines to get ready for story time.

Staff responded to children in a positive manner. For example, in the Junior Toddler room, a staff member invited children to choose some books and began to read an interactive story about The Flower Thief. However, some children began singing so the staff placed down the book and joined in the song and then checked in with the group to see if everyone was happy to continue to read the story. Everybody agreed and the story began again. In the Senior Toddler room, staff noticed that children were becoming bored of the activities available to them and asked the group if they wanted to tidy up and go outdoors. The children agreed and immediately began putting away the equipment on the shelves to prepare to go outdoors.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Staff communicated effectively between each other with the children. Staff were observed to check in with each other regarding changes to planned activities and if they required help. In the Junior Toddler room one staff checked with a team in another room to see if they had a bed ready for a child who was due to sleep. This demonstrated respect among the staff team.

The care rooms were laid out with well-developed cosy areas where children could take a break from group play or activities. The equipment and material were attractively laid out on open shelving for children to access independently. In the Senior Toddler room, some of the children's tabletop activities were displayed on trays for ease of transporting their work to the tables. This room was equipped with a variety of Montessori materials and were presented in themes such as sensorial, maths, culture, practical life, and language. The children engaged with inspector on the day to demonstrate their favourite piece of work.

Children's individual art was on display in all the care rooms and the communal areas of the building. Each room also displayed the daily routine, family photos, and birthday charts. Children's emerging interests were recorded and there were learning journals with links to the curriculum framework maintained for each child.

The service had small sensory room available if a child required one to one care and/or time away from group care to regulate and take a break. Staff and children were observed to use this room over the course of the inspection. Staff and management described how outdoor play was an integral part of the daily curriculum. On both days of the inspection all the children were observed to use the outdoor space.

The large outdoor area to the side and rear of the service with a smaller one to the front the building which was used by the younger children. There was an area which was partially covered, and staff described how children accessed the outdoors even during inclement weather.

These spaces had a variety of interest areas including a soft surface, a grassed area, a timber platform, mud kitchen, a bug hotel, buddy benches, picnic benches, and a large sand pit. These areas were well resourced with wheeled toys, balls, pots, pans, shovels, and constructions toys. There were tunnels for crawling, hills for climbing, goal posts, and a swing set. Children playing in the garden were wearing weatherproof leggings, jacket, and wellington boots. Staff were observed to support children in inquisitive play and showing the inspectors how the children had been digging for worms and collecting them in buckets.

The displays in the main hallway of the service celebrated the services links with the community. There was evidence of local and national fundraisers in the form of bake offs, superhero days and green school awards. Staff

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

described the service's St Patricks Day parade the previous week, where they paraded around the industrial estate and where local employees stood and cheered as they passed. Parents were invited to the service after the parade for refreshments.

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 had a secure entrance to the service with a buzzer system and keypad locks in place.
- Warm water was available for handwashing and was thermostatically controlled to not exceed 43°C to prevent a risk of scalding.
- Emergency exits, hallways, and the entrance to the service were clear of obstructions.
- All cleaning equipment and materials were safely locked away from the children's access.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary facilities had warm water, paper towels, and soap available for effective hand washing.
- Children in the Junior Preschool room were observed to wash their hands after using the toilets facilities.
- The service was visually clean, and a dedicated staff member was available, and observed cleaning the communal areas of the service.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff were observed to stay in the sleep room where children were sleeping on low beds.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- On day 1, in the senior baby sleep room, a blind cord had become detached from its safety attachment and was dangling loosely. It is acknowledged that the cot was placed at a distance to the cord so a child in the cot was unable to reach it.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Infection Control:

- The inspector observed the following non-compliances in the junior toddler's toilet facilities on day 1 of the inspection:
- The rubbish bin for disposal of used paper hand towels did not have a lid /cover and was not pedal operated, to align with best practices for infection control in a preschool setting.
- The class's paint brushes were stored in containers hanging off a rail over the hand wash basins in the toilet facilities which posed a risk of spread of any potential infection.
- The floor brush, dustpan and brush were also observed to be stored in the toilets which also posed a risk of spread of any potential infection.
- In both junior baby room sleep rooms the cots were not adequately spaced at 50 centimetres apart as recommended by infection control guidelines. Measurements recorded by the inspector indicated that only the cots on either side of the entrance doors to each sleep room were spaced at > 50 centimetres apart. All other spaces between the cots ranged from 15 to 30 centimetres which were not in line with the recommended spacing guidelines.

Safe Sleep:

- The room temperature in one of the sleep rooms in the baby room was not maintained within the recommended range of 16 to 20° C as required by safe sleep guidelines for children aged 1 year and younger. At 12:00, the inspector observed that the temperature in the sleep room was recorded as being 22°C and having been prompted by the inspector, the staff opened the windows to ventilate the room and pulled down the blackout blinds. At 12:47 the temperature was recorded as being 21.1°C and at 15:20 hours the sleep room temperature was recorded by the inspector as being 20°C.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The cord has been replaced by a different mechanism to operate the blind. Staff have been made aware of the risk associated with loose blind cords.

Infection Control:

2. The registered provider stated that children's art supplies, and cleaning materials have been removed from the sanitary area with new pedal bins installed where required. Staff have been reminded of the risk of cross infection particularly in sanitary areas.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

3. Two cots have been ordered with which are smaller and as a result, there will be more space to accommodate the required number of cots in the sleep room. Staff will have room to reconfigure the cots and ensure the require space is between them.

Safe Sleep:

4. The room temperature in the sleep rooms is now being maintained at the required temperature for sleeping children. Staff have received training on the use of the air conditioning unit in the sleep room.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

A copy of communication with the staff was submitted.

Photographic evidence was submitted.

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence was submitted.

Safe Sleep:

Photographic evidence was submitted.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1)

A record of the children's attendance was maintained over the two-day inspection. Staff members in the room were observed to record children arriving and leaving the service in a timely manner.

(3)(a)

On the inspector's arrival the main door into the service was secured with an electronic keypad and doorbell. The staff released the lock on the door for parents once they have confirmed who they were and who they were collecting.

Non-Compliance Information

(3)(b)

On the inspector's arrival on both days of the inspection, there was no requirement to sign in and through discussion with the registered provider they confirmed there was a visitors record book.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated there was a visitors log in operation in the service however it was not used on the day. Going forward, all visitors will be required to sign in and out of the building.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted.

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

Compliance Information

Over the course of the inspection, staff were noted to supervise children's activities primarily by sight. The room layouts supported staff to manage this easily without interfering with the children's play. Evidence was available to demonstrate ongoing supervision, for example, written observation records describing children's days. Each care room either had sanitary facilities directly off the rooms or adjacent to them. Children in the Senior Preschool room were observed to use the toilets independently with a staff member checking in with them if required. This respected children's privacy and independence while staff were aware of their whereabouts.

Staff levels were maintained at adequate levels during the inspection with additional adults available if required to assist staff in the rooms to support transitions.

During children's sleep times, staff either checked the children sleeping in cots every 10 minutes or a staff member stayed in the rooms where the children were sleeping on low beds.

Staff were observed to be vigilant when children were playing outdoors. They were observed to engage in the children's play whilst being aware of others in the outdoor area.