

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH052
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Name of Service:	Grovelands Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	IDA Business Park, Dublin Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 NN90
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Name of Registered Provider:	Regina Bushell
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	67	PM	64
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy & C. O'Connor Hughes
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.
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Description of service

The service is registered as a full day care service. The age range of children that the service can accommodate is 0 to 6 years of age. The service is operated by an independent provider as part of a multiple.

The Early Years' Service is located in a purpose-built two storey premises. Nine pre-school rooms, two sleep rooms, a kitchen, a staff room, an office and a reception area are provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. On-site parking and set down facilities are available. The service is situated in a business park on the outskirts of the town of Athlone, County Westmeath.

Staffing

There are thirty-eight staff employed in the service. The designated person in charge, a centre supervisor, fourteen childcare practitioners, two school age childcare staff, the chef, four support staff and a cleaner who came on duty in the afternoon were present on the day of inspection.

The registered provider is not part of the staff complement and was not present during the inspection.

The designated person in charge, the director of operations and the registered provider were present for the closing meeting.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

- Regulation 9 -Management and Recruitment (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) (4)
- Regulation 11– Staffing Levels (1)(2) (8)(a)
- Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(b)
- Regulation 20- Facilities for Rest and Play
- Regulation 22- Food and Drink
- Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child
- Regulation 24 – Checking in and Out and Record of Attendance
- Regulation 25 - First Aid
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures
- Regulation 28 – Insurance
- Regulation 31- Notification of incident

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation

- Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(b)
- Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

As a result, the scope of the inspection included Sunflower room, Primrose room, Mulberry room, Bluebells room and Sycamore room.

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

(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 person in charge and deputy person in charge were available in the service.

(b)

The person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.

Thirty-eight staff files including the operations manager were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available for thirty-eight staff from past employers and from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the thirty-eight staff files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of thirteen staff who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

Police vetting was not available for one staff member working in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d)

The registered provider stated in the response that International vetting was applied for and received for the staff member in question. (police vetting submitted).

The service has previously put a system in place on the employment application form and on the employee details file. Applicants are asked "Have you lived outside of Ireland for a period longer than 6 months?" The staff member is

required to click yes or no. If no, no further action is needed. If yes, then the staff member is requested to apply for and provide vetting for the relevant country. This system was put in place after this staff member joined the team. Had it been in place prior it would have been noticed and applied for. (pre-employment documents submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were sixty-seven children attending the service in the morning and sixty-four children in the afternoon supervised by sixteen adults.

(8)(a)

The roster and staff attendance records reviewed indicated that two adults are on the premises during the hours of operation.

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

The Sunflower, Primrose, Mulberry, Bluebell and Sycamore rooms were inspected and the following was noted:

(1)(b)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. The care practices and routines were child led with the staff following the individual verbal and non-verbal cues of the child. Children were observed to move between the indoor and outdoor environments enjoying physical play and gross motor activities as well as imaginative and sensory play outdoors. Children who went to the toilet independently were supervised by a staff member. Nappy changing was carried out regularly and as needed. Children who required nappy changing were provided with notice from the staff member. Staff were observed to communicate and interact positively with the child during nappy changing. The nappy changing practice observed was carried out in line with the displayed service procedure. A self-service family style dining experience was observed in the service. Tablecloths, age and stage appropriate ceramics, cutlery and jugs of water were in place. The children were given plenty of time to enjoy the whole food experience. Staff supported children at mealtimes as they encouraged conversations and interactions with the children. Children were encouraged to feed themselves and staff assisted the children as required. Younger children wore clothing protectors during mealtimes. Staff were observed to clean each child's face and hands after mealtimes to ensure that each child was clean and comfortable.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Staff were observed to give comfort and reassurance to the children. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, toileting and mealtimes.

Seamless transitions were noted as the children were given a lead in time to change from one activity to another. Positive behaviour strategies were observed during the inspection. Staff used a calm approach using soft language tones, giving positive praise and encouragement to children. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff. To support communication between the service and each child's family, a handheld electronic device is used to record photographs and narratives relating to the children's activities and daily life in the service. Parents and guardians can access and view this information using their own individual mobile phone application.

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)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, sensory, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, home corners and physical play.

(b)

The baby sleep room was located adjacent to the sunflower room. The toddler sleep room was located along the main corridor. Each sleep room was equipped with standard cots for use by children under the age of two. Low level beds were available for children over two years of age to sleep. Soft furnishings provided appropriate rest facilities in the pre-school rooms for any child who wished to avail of rest and relaxation.

(3)(a)

Separate outdoor play areas were available for younger and older children. All-weather surfaces were in place. Toys and equipment included a playhouse with stairs and a ladder, cycle paths, balance beams, benches, goal posts, an embedded slide and crawl tunnel. A sheltered area was available and equipped with an outdoor play kitchen. A variety of bikes, trikes and other toys for physical play were also noted.

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

All meals and snacks are prepared fresh on site by the cook and assistant cook. The daily menu plan reflected the provision of the food for breakfast, morning snack, dinner and evening snack. The menu plan demonstrated that all dietary needs were catered for in the service. The main meal of the day was nutritious with additional helpings of chicken in a tomato and basil sauce with pasta or potatoes available to the children. Water and milk were offered to children.

Children enjoyed the selection of food provided during the inspection. Fresh fruit was available in each of the pre-school rooms for children to self-serve in addition to the scheduled meals and snacks.

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 entrance to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. A coded system was in place for access to the service. Visitor access was controlled. The inspectors signed the visitor book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. Daily checklists were available and reviewed in respect of the pre-school rooms and the sanitary accommodation.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. The pre-school rooms were ventilated by natural ventilation with windows open. The sanitary accommodation and nappy changing areas were ventilated by natural or mechanical ventilation.

Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the pre-school rooms and the sanitary accommodation. The temperature of the water recorded at the wash hand basins was approximately 33 degrees Celsius.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet under the supervision of staff. Staff were observed to wash their hands during the inspection. The nappy changing procedure observed was carried out correctly.

A refrigerator was available for the storage of beverages and perishable foods in the pre-school rooms. Soothers and bottles were stored correctly in the refrigerator in the Sunflower room.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school rooms and in the associated sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in the service.

Safe Sleep:

Regular physical checks of the sleeping children were carried out by the staff member to observe the sleeping children. A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted on a handheld electronic device. A mobile air conditioning unit was in operation in the sleep rooms. The sleep room temperatures noted were 18 °Celsius in the baby and toddler sleep rooms.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed and fire assembly points were located to the rear of the premises.

Outing:

Completed checklists and risk assessment documentation were available for review in respect of outings from the service.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a nominated staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) has to be approved by a staff member.

(b)

A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

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)

Four adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and were available on the premises during the hours of operation on a rostered basis.

(2)(a)

A fully equipped first aid box or cabinet was readily available on the ground and first floor of the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the children in the pre-school 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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 10 July 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The smoke alarms and firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced on the 27 June 2025 and on the 5 September 2024 respectively.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

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

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(b) the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981)

Compliance Information

(b)
The registered provider submitted a notification of incident to the Agency within 3 working days of an infectious disease that occurred in respect of children and staff since the last inspection on the 16 January 2023.