

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016LH001		
Name of Service:	Philipstown Early Childcare		
Address of Service:	Stifyans Cross, Philipstown, Dunleer, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A92 WV99		
Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Callaghan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	16/09/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM -
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna		
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).			
Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable.		

Description of service

Philipstown Early Childcare is a privately owned service that has been in operation since May 2016. It provides a sessional service to pre-school children aged 2-6 years and operates from 9am to 12midday and 12:30pm to 3:30pm Monday to Friday. This service operates from the grounds of the registered providers own home and is located in a rural area of Co. Louth. The premises consists of a purposely developed playroom within the providers own home that can cater for a maximum of 8 preschool children at any one time. In addition, there is a log cabin which is located to the rear of the property and can cater for a maximum of 10 pre-school children at any one time. Sanitary accommodation is located off both preschool rooms. The children have access to an outdoor play area on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and 2 adults work directly with the pre-school children on a daily basis.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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.

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 service had a designated person in charge, who is the registered provider, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(2) The files for 3 staff were reviewed.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references were on file for 3 adults.

A total of 5 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

One written and validated reference from a reputable source was on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 3 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for 3 staff, demonstrated that no adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult, therefore police vetting was not required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 3 staff employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or 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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at maximum attendance.

One adult cared for 10 children aged 3 years 8 months to 4 years 4 months in Claire's Room.

One adult cared for 7 children aged 3 years 8 months to 3 years 9 months in Lisa's Room.

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

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

- Healthy eating is promoted within the service, children's snacks were observed to contain a wide selection of fruit, bread rolls/waffles and crackers. Snack time was observed to be relaxed. The children in Claire's Room were observed to wash their hands before getting their own snacks and choosing where to have their snack outdoors to include at tables and chairs, wooden stools, wooden benches or floor mats in the outdoor area.
- The children were observed to use the toilet independently with staff supports provided when required.
- Children appearances were cared for through appropriate outdoor clothing in use, to include waterproof overalls, coats and hats.
- Rest areas are provided in the indoor and outdoor environments through soft mats and cushions, where children can rest and relax when they wish. A wooden house in the outdoor area was also set up where children could spend some quiet time playing with toys on the floor and relaxing on floor mats.
- The children in Claire's Room spent all their time in the outdoor area during the inspection. The children in Lisa's room played in the outdoor area before home time at 12 midday. The children were dressed appropriately in the outdoors for the weather on the day of the inspection.

Supporting Relationships

- The atmosphere upon the inspectors arrival to the preschool service was fun and inviting. The children were observed to play indoors in Lisa's room and in the outdoors in Claires room. The children were observed to be consistently engaged in play and having conversations with their peers and the staff who cared for them.
- The children were observed to be familiar with the staff and strong relationships were observed, with staff observed to be aware of children's likes, dislikes and personal preferences. Although early into the new

preschool year the younger children demonstrated familiarity with their daily routine, which was observed when they had a conversation with the staff member that story time comes next in their routine.

- The staff were observed to communicate using soft gentle tones while interacting with the children. The children were observed to take pride in their work, for example the children had made rainbows with pegs the day previous to the inspection, and the children showed their peg boards with pride to the inspector.
- Communication with parents is through in person at arrival and collection times. The staff advised that individual text messages are used also, which was seen in practise on the day when a child was observed to ask the staff member to “take a photo of me and my rainbow and send it my mammy.”

Physical And Material Environment

- The indoor play rooms were laid out to include designated interest areas such as construction, home corner and dress up, table top areas, creative areas, jigsaws, rest areas, book areas, floor play with garage cars houses and figurines.
- Materials were freely available and accessible to the children on low level shelves at children’s level, nurturing independence to retrieve and self-care to return. Bright colourful displays to include birthday charts, family photos and children’s creative art pieces were on display on the walls. A local community poster was on display, to include local schools, football club and a farm.
- The outdoor area is large and secure. Ground surfacing included gravel, grass, bark, paving stones, wooden decking and concrete. Several climbing structures, swings, slides, a tunnel and ride on toys were provided for children’s use. A mud kitchen with play equipment, a plastic castle unit, a planting area with soil and pots and a sand tray was also provided for children’s use.

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

The registered provider ensured all reasonable measures were put in place to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending such as:

General Safety:

- Upon the inspectors arrival the premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The garden area was secured by fencing, and no hazards were identified upon inspection.
- Toys and play equipment available to the children were observed to be maintained in good repair.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- Fire exits were observed free from obstruction during the inspection.
- The children were observed to be appropriately supervised in both the indoor and outdoor play environments.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Thermostatically controlled running water to max of 43°C, liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated bins were provided for handwashing. Hand washing was observed in practise before snack time and after children used the toilet.
- Sanitary areas are ventilated through means of openable windows.
- Cleaning schedules were in place, and the service was presented in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Waste bins were stored in an area inaccessible to the children.

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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times, this was evidenced by 3 staff FAR certificates on file.
- (2) (a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available on the premises and was stored in accessible and conspicuous location and available at all times.

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 fire fighting 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 record of the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded in June 2025. The service was closed in July and August.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated October 2024, and the smoke alarms was dated August 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for up to 22 pre-school children attending the service on a Sessional basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.