

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019KK001
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Name of Service:	Croia Childcare
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Address of Service:	23 Greenview, Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 N2Y8
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tina Hayde
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	11
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton.
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
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Description of service

Croía Childcare is a registered part-time childcare service providing a sessional service for preschool children aged 2 to 6 years, between the hours of 09:00 to 12:30 hours and a part-time service between the hours of 09:00 to 14:00 hours. The service operates from a purpose-built classroom located at the back of the registered provider's residence. The service is also registered to provide a school aged service.

The maximum number of children that the service can accommodate for the early childhood care and education (ECCE) session, from 09:00 to 12:30 hours, is 17 and for the part-time service, outside of these hours, up until 14:00 hours is 12 children.

Staffing

There were three staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. Each of the three staff members, who as part of their role in the service was to work directly with the preschool children, held at least a Level 5 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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 the following regulations, 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15, 19, and 23.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the classroom and outdoor area.

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
- (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.

(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 designated person in charge on the day of inspection and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) Both the designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge were onsite during the inspection.

(c) The inspector observed that there was a clear management structure in place in the service and each staff member was aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) Staff files for the three staff members employed to work directly with the children as part of their role in the service were reviewed by the inspector and the following observations found.

- (a)(b) There were two validated references available in each of the staff member's files from either a past employer or reputable source in the case of a person who had no past employers.
- (c) Garda Vetting certificates were available on file for each staff member working directly with the children. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Not applicable as no staff member had lived outside of the State for a period of six months or longer.
- (4) Certificates of accredited qualifications were available in each of the three staff members' files demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 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.*
- (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) The inspector observed that there was always an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance.

(4) There were 3 qualified staff members present with the 16 preschool children attending the ECCE session between the hours of 09:00 to 12:30 hours. From 12:30 hours to 13:00 hours, three staff remained with 11 preschool children and until 14:00 hours, when the preschool service finished, 2 staff members remained with 10 preschool children.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times, while the preschool children were in attendance, as is required by regulation for a registered part-time service.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 preschool records available for children registered to attend the service, the inspector was assured that all particulars (a) to (i) were recorded in detail by the registered provider.

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) On arrival to the service the inspector observed that six preschool children were engaged in a variety of play activities with the registered provider, while the eight school aged children present were leaving to be escorted to the nearby school by a second staff member.

As more preschool children arrived at the service for the early childhood care and education (ECCE) session, the inspector observed the registered provider engaging with parents, listening and communicating with parents and using resources such as translation applications to negotiate language barriers to ensure communication was clear regarding children's needs. The staff were observed to work in partnership with parents updating them on their children's progress and responding to their requests regarding snacks and drinks.

The children, on arrival to the service were observed to be familiar with their surroundings placing their coats and lunch bags on the individual hooks provided and putting any perishable lunch items in the refrigerator and their drinks bottles on the drinks table.

Children played freely, choosing to pick or join in activities of their choice. A wide variety of play resources were available with appropriately sized tables and chairs provided for the preschool children.

Defined areas of interest included a kitchen/home area, art easel, dress-up area, ice-cream cart, construction area and nature table.

Play materials and resources included open ended materials such as cereal boxes, a small kettle, pots and pans to stimulate imaginary play in the kitchen/home corner, as well as a shop register, radio and office equipment to adapt the area to children's emergent interests.

Dress- up outfits, play hair-dressing equipment, musical instruments, dolls and doll equipment were also available. Easily accessible storage containers provided connective and manipulative pieces and blocks of various textures, jigsaws, peg- boards, and small world figurines of dinosaurs and animals, for the children to play with.

Tabletop activities included painting and printing activities on coloured paper, where children matched primary colours and practiced pouring and transferring. Children wore appropriate aprons to protect their clothing. The activity was child led with children confidently mixing colours and informing the staff “I mixed yellow and orange and I got a rainbow colour!”.

At snack time the children were observed to wash their hands and tables were disinfected with paper towelling and disinfectant before children chose a plate and cutlery and sat in groups to have their lunches. Staff sat with the children during snack time, supporting them in opening containers and chatting to them.

Staff spoke gently to the children and used positive reinforcement when children were observed demonstrating kindness and support to each other. Children were reminded to listen to each other during conflict resolution practices and the inspector observed that children quickly resolved conflicts at their level, and learning from each situation.

There was evidence of curricular planning in the service and consideration and inclusion of children’s emergent interests. There was a specific shelf entitled “Our Interest Shelf” which documented that the children were currently interested “ the difference in the sky” , the staff and children were exploring why night and day happen, including the planet pathway changes and important celebratory dates at this particular time of year such as “Chinese New Year”.

Non-Compliance Information

1. While a variety of age-appropriate books were displayed on shelving on the wall there was no defined rest area for the children to sit and relax on occasions when they were tired or needed to rest. There was no clear area for sleep mats to be placed if a child attending the part-time service wished to nap during the day.
2. While the inspector acknowledges and commends the children’s freedom of choice, between outdoor and indoor play, there were occasions when the children wished to go outside and the door to the classroom remained open. The temperature in the classroom was recorded at 16 °C between 09:30 – 10:30 hours, at 11:20 hours the temperature dropped from 15.9 °C to 15.3°C. At 11:25 hours the temperature dropped to 14°C. The children inside could be observed to have cold pink hands. The door was eventually closed but the room remained cold.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider has submitted the following response.

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. There is multiple equipment for the children to sit and relax, for example, vacuum sealed bags containing mats with blankets & bed linen and multiple soft cushions and mats. The team have made a cosy corner specifically for resting. The children can now take the mats into this specific corner.

The team had originally taken out the soft couch as the younger children were jumping off it. It has been slowly reintroduced into the setting. Staff sit with the younger children to show them how to sit on the couch.

The cosy corner is clearly marked for the children to come and sit there to relax. This corner has books, family photos and sensory toys on it.

2. The children are free to move indoor and outdoor as they wish.

This was the first day the children were back after the storm. The children assisted an adult outside taking out the toys from storage, this may be why children presented with pink hands. Generally, the children will close the door behind them, however this was not the case on this morning, as they were helping.

The heating was on, and temperature did rise after a period, it did take a little longer for the room to reach the adequate temperature as the door had remained open and it was colder outside. Staff have spoken with the children, and are observing the door to ensure it remains closed for the children who remain indoors.

Staff will remind children to keep the door closed to ensure the temperature of the room remains at the appropriate temperature throughout the morning.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of "Cosy" Corner sign.

Photographic evidence of a soft circular cushion on the floor and three other cushions hanging on the wall.

2. No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The response submitted addresses the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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:

At the entrance to the service, a high metal gate was secured from inside, which could only be opened by staff. A motion activated camera bell provided staff with a view of parents/ guardians and any visitors to the service prior to authorising entry to the service. This assisted in ensuring that no unauthorised person entered the service and that no child left the service unsupervised.

A high wall secured the backyard where the children's outdoor play area was located.

Infection Control:

The children and staff were observed washing their hands post toileting, messy play, outdoor play and prior to snack times.

Administration of Medication:

In general staff reported that medications were not required to be administered in the service. However, in discussion with the staff present, staff were aware of the services administration of medication policy and the procedures to be followed if a child required anti-febrile medication or a prescribed medication.

Safe Sleep:

Vinyl covered sleep mats and appropriate bed linen were available for any children attending the service who wished to sleep during the part-time session.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that outings are not operated outside of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. An electric toaster and kettle were observed on the windowsill of the classroom. While neither piece of equipment was observed in use, the leads of the kettle and toaster were dangling on the counter below and could be reached by a child, potentially causing injury.

2. While it is acknowledged that a window blind cord had been shortened to be completely out of the reach of children and was located high up, it was not secured and could be accessed by a child if they climbed onto the countertop.

Infection Control:

1.Children did not have access to enough toilets for the group size. There were two children’s toilets provided in the classroom, while staff used a downstairs toilet in the registered provider’s house.

While it is acknowledged that the 16 children in attendance on the day of inspection were observed freely accessing the toilet on the left-hand side, they were unable to access the toilet on the right-hand side, as a school aged study table and chairs obstructed the entrance to this toilet.

2.The inspector observed that there was no paper towelling in either of the two children’s toilets and that the registered provider was erecting hooks to hold individual cloth towels for the children, in the toilet on the left hand-side.

A cloth hand towel was observed hanging in the toilet on the right-hand side.

This practice was not in line with infection control guidelines for preschools which states that paper hand towels and liquid hand soap must be provided for effective handwashing.

The provision of cloth towels posed a potential risk of cross infection to the children. The registered provider was informed of this immediately at the time of observation.

3.The nappy bin provided on the windowsill in the toilet on the left-hand side was not pedal operated and staff had to lift the lid to place a nappy inside which posed a potential risk of cross infection to the staff in the service.

4. A small bin provided on the “self-care” table for the children to put used tissues in was not pedal operated and children were observed having to push the lid to place their used tissues inside. This posed a potential risk of cross-infection to the children, as a number of children were observed to have thick green mucous draining from their noses.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response.

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The kettle and toaster have been in the service since opening in 2019. Staff initially used them for the school aged service; however they have not used them recently and put them up off the counter into the windowsill out of reach. The short lead from the appliances were resting on the countertop, children would have to climb onto the counter to reach the plugs. They have been removed permanently as they are not used in the service.

2. The window blind is up over 6 feet. Again, the children would need to climb up onto a counter and stand in the sink to reach the window cord. It was purposely shortened and hung this high to prevent children from reaching it. The short window blind has been secured to the wall.

Infection Control:

1. On the morning of inspection, out of the 16 children present in the room, there were 7 children in nappies. There are two toilets that are always available to the children. The table was pushed back to the wall to allow more space in the setting. If the children did need the second toilet, they will ask, and the table would be moved. This is often the case in the setting.

The school aged table has been removed permanently and there is a foldable table which is stored away after the afterschool session. It is brought in and out daily.

2. There was white disposable paper in the left-hand bathroom and in the classroom, however it was noted afterwards it in fact was not accessible to the children. The provider was erecting stronger hooks as the pre-ecce children had pulled down the original hooks. This could be seen from the glue residue present under each child's picture. The children were involved in assisting with the hanging of the hooks as a little boy got a toy hammer to help the practitioner.

There was a single towel hanging in the right-hand bathroom, however the registered provider pointed out where fresh clean individual towels were left for all children to access accordingly. The paper towels had been taken away as the pre-ecce children had been blocking the toilets with it. Individual hand towels did work better for them however the team are aware now they are not in line with infection control guidelines.

As suggested at the time of inspection, these individual cloths could be used to wash faces, children were heavily congested on the morning of inspection, so the service decided against this as it posed potential risk of cross infection to the children. The team have removed all individual towels and paper towels are accessible to the children.

3. The nappy bin in the bathroom was in fact a sensor bin. Staff had to wave their hand over the bin for it to open, however it is acknowledged that the bins were not fully functioning on the morning of the inspection.

The staff wear gloves when nappy changing, and proper handwashing is followed to prevent and cross contamination.

The electronic bin has been replaced with a pedal bin. The pedal bin is placed on the floor and pre-ecce children have been getting mixed up. It was suggested that staff remove soiled nappies to the main bin the morning. Staff are often not able to do so as the main bins are placed at the front of the building.

4. The snuffle station has been in the service since opening, this swivel lid bin is placed close on the station for the children to dispose of their tissue and to promote self-esteem and independence. The team had looked at introducing a mirror to the snuffle station as suggested.

The team have removed the snuffle station permanently as children will have to walk across the room to the main pedal bin to dispose of used tissue. Instead, a shelf has been placed over the bin with a box of tissues on top that are easily accessible to the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence that the kettle, toaster and leads of same, were removed from windowsill.
2. No evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

1. Photographic evidence that the table has been removed from where it was obstructing the entrance of the second toilet unit.
2. Photograph of paper towel in the paper towel dispenser.
3. Photograph of pedal operated bin.
4. Photograph of tissue box on a shelf.

Summary Comment

The response submitted addresses the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

(2)(a)(b) A first aid box was available on a high shelf in the classroom and was always available to the children in attendance.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) While it was observed on review of the staff files that the registered provider had accredited first aid responder (FAR) training, there was no other staff member trained in first aid responder training employed in the service.

The staff roster did not demonstrate that there were additional staff trained in FAR to provide cover, in the event that the registered provider was on leave.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider has submitted the following response.

Corrective and Preventive Action

As required and clarified with our local CCC, for people trained with first aid responder, at least one person must be trained in first aid responder is available to the children while the service is in operation. As stated in the report the registered provider is FAR trained and lives on the premises. This person is always on the premises during hours of operation. There are also other members of staff with additional first aid training on site.

The service can provide FAR training for another member of staff for the unlikelihood of the registered provider not been on site.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The response submitted addresses the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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) The registered provider demonstrated that a record of any fire drills carried out in the service was maintained. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 20 January 2025.
- (b) Records of the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained in the service. The last date of the annual service for the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in February 2024 and for the smoke alarms were recorded as having taken place on the 18 June 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed at the entrance door. A fire assembly point was clearly signed on the fence in the outdoor play area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

On review of the service's current insurance certificate, displayed on the parents notice board, the inspector observed that insurance certificate detailed cover for a part-time daycare service with afterschool for up to 20 children. The date of renewal for the insurance certificate was the 27 March 2025.