

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

| | | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|----|---|
| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2022KE005 | | | | |
| Name of Service: | Hazelhatch Preschool and Afterschool | | | | |
| Address of Service: | Celbridge GAA, Hazelhatch Road, Celbridge, Co. Kildare | | | | |
| Eircode: | W23 YY29 | | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Beatriz Gomez | | | | |
| Service type: | Part Time, Sessional | | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 10/09/2025 | | | | |
| Date of Regulatory Compliance Meeting: | 06/11/2025 | | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>16</td> <td>PM</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </table> | AM | 16 | PM | 8 |
| AM | 16 | PM | 8 | | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Rd, Naas, Co Kildare |
| Inspection undertaken by: | R. Brien |
| 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 | N/A |
|---------------------------------|-----|

Description of service

Hazelhatch Preschool and Afterschool provides part time and sessional care to children aged 2 - 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 09:00 to 14:00, Monday to Friday. The sessional service operates from 09:00 to 12:00.

The service operates from a room in Celbridge GAA club on the outskirts of Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The premises consists of a preschool room with adjoining sanitary facilities and the gym hall which the children can access.

There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area adjacent to the service and a fully enclosed astro pitch which is shared with the adjacent primary school.

Staffing

The service currently employs three staff. There were three adults working directly with the children on the day of inspection including the registered provider and one student.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

9 (1)(a)(b),(2)(a)(b)(c)(d),(4) – Management and recruitment,
11 (1),(2),(4),(8)(a) – Staffing levels,
19 (1)(a)(b) – Health, welfare and development of child,
23 – Safeguarding, health, safety and welfare of child,
25 – First aid,
26 (1),(4) – Fire safety measures.

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

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.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice was issued on 10 September 2025 for non-compliance with regulation 9(2)(c). A mandatory Garda vetting disclosure was not available for one adult who had access to children contrary to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

The registered provider submitted a response on 11 September 2025 outlining the actions being taken to address this non-compliance.

Following the submission of the first CAPA, a regulatory compliance meeting was held on 06 November 2025 with the registered provider to discuss unresolved non-compliance which posed a risk to children.

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)(b)
- The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required. The person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

The inspection focused on the recruitment records for two adults employed since the last inspection on 05 January 2023 and one student who was present in the service.

Regulation 9(2)(c) was reviewed in respect of these three adults and one other adult who works in the service. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows.

(a)

Of the six validated, written references that were required, four were available from a past employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was required for three adults and was available for two of these adults who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as an adult.

(4)

Records were available evidencing that the three staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(a)(b)

There were no references on file for the student who was present on the day of inspection.

(c)

A mandatory Garda vetting disclosure was not available for one adult who was present in the service on 10 September 2025 contrary to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. An Immediate Action Notice was issued on the day of the inspection. The registered provider submitted a response on 11 September 2025 outlining the actions being taken to address this non-compliance.

(d)

Police vetting was not available for one adult who had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

Two references have been received and validated by service by contacting the two people who wrote them.

References will always be checked and filed before employment starts.

(c)

Student was not in service after inspection was carried out. She carried out her placement once Garda vetting was completed.

(d)

Adult asked to seek for police vetting and was in touch with embassy. Spoke to adult about police clearance and the need of proof of the registration.

To ensure and/or contact college for vetting information for students that commence placement to ensure vetting is completed before placement.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address these non-compliances.

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.

(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

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(2)(4)

The registered provider did not ensure that an adequate number of qualified adults were working directly with the children attending the service on the day of inspection. The minimum ratio of adults to children was not maintained in the service at all times. An insufficient number of qualified adults were available to the children attending between 10:00 and 10:45. During this time there was one adult present with 16 children. Two adults were required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(2)(4)

All staff is on ratio now and adhering to a calendar to get time off. Staff meeting organised to discuss the inspection, staff informed just one person at all times to be off and to inform management as soon as possible to ensure plenty of time to find staff cover. Calendar is provided for them to log any day or time off needed. Always to ensure staff is on ratio and always to ensure right cover for when any staff is off or sick.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address this non-compliance.

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 service had a healthy eating policy in place and staff reported that children bring their lunch in from home. Lunch took place at 10:20. The service provides an afternoon snack to children who are attending on a part time basis. Lunch time was observed to be a relaxed, sociable occasion with children given time to finish their meal. Drinking water was accessible to children throughout the day and children were given water with their meal.

Children were given responsibility appropriate to their age and were encouraged and supported to be independent. Inspectors observed children cleaning up after their play and lunch and using the toilet independently. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children's independence during play and lunch time.

Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children throughout the inspection. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff were observed to use gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service's behaviour management policy. Staff were observed acknowledging children's achievements and efforts positively. The atmosphere in the service appeared calm and relaxed.

Children’s language development was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and stories which were observed during the inspection.

The staff described how they communicate with parents daily about their child at arrival and collection time. Staff were observed to work well as a team, frequently communicating with each other in relation to the daily routine and children’s needs.

The care room was bright and was arranged into defined areas of interest providing children with the freedom to play and explore. Designated areas of interest included arts and crafts materials, a home corner, small world toys, construction toys, manipulative play and a rest area and library. The care room provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and was adequately resourced with a variety of materials.

The environment was laid out to support the children’s independence. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care room.

An enclosed outdoor play area was provided on the premises with grass surfacing. A range of developmentally appropriate play equipment was available to the children in this area.

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 door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate. The children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including after using the toilet and before lunch.
- An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The premises, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in good condition.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits were clear of obstruction.

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)

A person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous location within the room.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service 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 written record was available detailing monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service.
- (b)
- The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. There was a record to show that the fire fighting equipment had been serviced in August 2025 and that maintenance of the smoke alarm system had taken place on 26 August 2025.
- (4)
- The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.