

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023CE001
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Name of Service:	Laura's Childcare
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Address of Service:	Knocksaggart, Ballynacally, Ennis, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 XP77
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Name of Registered Provider:	Laura Corbett
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Quality and Regulation Directorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ennis Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare V95TY4E
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy & J. Hayes
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

Lauras Childcare was established in 2023, in the rural village of Ballynacally, on the outskirts of Ennis, County Clare. The service is registered with Tusla to operate a part-time service, in the preschool room, Monday to Friday from 09:30 to 14:00 for children aged two to six years. A school aged service is also registered and will be accommodated in the pre-school room each afternoon. The service is registered to be located on the ground floor of an adapted commercial premises. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

Seven adults are employed by the service. The registered provider and service manager provided an administrative role and relief cover when required in the care rooms. Four of the seven adults working directly with the children held a qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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, safety and premises and facilities. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations: The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 8- Notification of change in circumstances (1)
Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3) and (4)
Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1)(2)(8)(a)
Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service (h)
Regulation 19 (1)(a) Basic Needs of Children
Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child
Regulation 26- Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)
Regulation 29 –Premises (c)(e)

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

20 January 2026

An Immediate Action Notice 1 (IAN) was issued to the registered provider to respond to a significant risk in relation to hot water that was not thermostatically controlled. The recorded high temperatures of 61.5° Celsius and 51.8° Celsius respectively posed a risk of a scald injury to a child. These temperatures were above the recommended safe temperature of 43° Celsius.

Refer to Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child under General Safety for further details.

21 January 2026

A response to the IAN 1 was received from the registered provider which would mitigate the risk identified.

21 January 2026

An Immediate Action Notice 2 (IAN) was issued to the registered provider to respond to risk identified in relation to the service operating outside its registration status without prior approval from the Early Years Inspectorate in relation to the following:

- By opening and occupying two new rooms.
- By operating a full day care service from 08:00 to 18:00.
- By caring for more than 22 pre-school children.
- By caring for pre-school children aged less than two years.

The registered provider was operating the service from two rooms contrary to instructions issued by the local authority chief fire officer. A referral was made to the Local Authority Fire Officer in respect of the opening and occupying of these rooms in the service.

Refer to Regulation 8- Notification of change in circumstances for further details.

22 January 2026

An inadequate response to the IAN 2 was received and a request for further information and response was issued to the registered provider.

23 January 2026

An inadequate response to IAN 2 was received. The registered provider was informed that the response was inadequate, and the service was referred to the National Registration Enforcement Panel (NREP) for consideration.

28 January 2026 and 30 January 2026

The registered provider provided a written response which stated that the service would revert to its registered status from 02 February 2026. The registered provider stated that the Toddler and After school rooms will be closed and care for children under two years of age will not be provided until the requirements directed by the Local Fire Authority and the Early Years Inspectorate are in place and approved.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, the manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
The registered provider was found to be operating the service outside of its registration status and without prior approval of the Early Years Inspectorate as detailed below:

- The service operated as a full day care service from 08:00 to 18:00 during the inspection. The service is registered to operate as a part-time service from 09:30 to 14:00.
- Twenty-five pre-school children attended the service during the inspection. The service is registered to accommodate twenty-two pre-school children at any one time.
- Seven pre-school children aged under two years were present. The service is registered to accommodate pre-school children ranging from two to six years.
- Two early years rooms were in operation, a Toddler room and a Pre-school room. The service is registered to operate the Pre-school room only.

An Immediate Action Notice 2 (IAN) was issued to the registered provider to respond to a risk identified in relation to the service operating outside its registration status without prior approval from the Early Years Inspectorate. The registered provider was operating the service from two rooms contrary to instructions issued by the local authority fire officer.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered Provider the following response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

A response was received in relation to the immediate action notice 2 stating that the service would revert to its registered status from 02 February 2026. The registered provider stated that the Toddler and After school rooms will be closed and care for children under two years of age will not be provided until the requirements directed by the Local Fire Authority and the Early Years Inspectorate are in place and approved.

The full day care service has closed, and the service has returned to its part time registration from 09:30 to 14:00. Only accommodating 22 pre-school children ranging from two to six years. The Toddler room is closed. All documents required for change in circumstances application will be submitted to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate before any changes are implemented and future changes will only take place following approval. The registered provider will follow all instructions issued by the local authority fire officer.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary Evidence

Summary Comment

The registered provider continues to engage with the registration department and the Clare County Council Fire Officer in relation to registration requirement and approval of use for the new section of the building and Toddler Room.

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.*

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

On the 20 January 2026 the registered provider was the person in charge, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and a named person to deputise were available at all times during the inspection.

Files were available for the seven adults employed by the service. The findings included the following:

(2)(a)

Ten of the fourteen required written references from past employers were available. Eight of the ten available references were validated.

(b)

Three of the fourteen written references required were provided from a source other than a past employer. Two of the three available references were validated.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the adults employed by the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for the adults.

(d)

International police vetting was not required. The adults employed by the service had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.

(4)

Four of the seven adults working directly with the children held an Early Childhood Care and Education qualification ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(a) (b)

1. A written reference with evidence of validation was not available in respect of one adult.
2. Two references from past employers in respect of one adult were not validated.
3. One reference from a source other than a past employer was not validated.

(3)

Three adults were appointed and allowed access to the children attending the pre-school service prior to the required references and garda vetting being available and assessed by the service.

(4)

Three adults working directly with the children attending the service did not hold a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at minimum of Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Not appropriately vetting staff or employing appropriately qualified staff may potentially impact the health and safety of children attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

The registered provider has validated all references for staff members and has submitted the validated references to the inspectorate. The service has a policy in place which covers all references being validated before someone is hired.

(3)

The registered provider has validated all the references for staff members and has submitted the validated references to the inspectorate. The service has a policy in place which covers all references being validated before someone is hired.

Two adults without the required qualification, will no longer work with the preschool children until their QQI Level 5 ECCE has been achieved.

The third adult has achieved a QQI level 5 ECCE and this has now been added to the file.

The registered provider stated that all staff employed will have an Early Childhood Care and Education QQI Level 5.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic and Documentary Evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence submitted by the registered provider, the areas of non-compliance are addressed under Regulation 9(2)(a)(b), (3) (4).

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)

During the inspection, an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.

(2)

On the 20 January 2026 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained in the service. Seven adults worked directly with the twenty-five pre-school children in attendance in the morning. Six adults worked directly with fourteen children in attendance in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that more than two adults were available in the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(h)

An accurate written record of attendance of each pre-school child was not maintained:

The arrival times of three pre-school children who were attending the Pre-school room were not recorded.

This posed a risk in the event of a fire and the risk of impeding the safe evacuation of children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(h)

An accurate written record of attendance of each pre-school child was updated including the arrival and departure times for all children. Staff were informed of the importance of recording times to ensure the safety of the children in the event of a fire and safe evacuation of the children.

The registered provider stated that the service will continue to record arrival and departure times for all children and carry out regular risk assessments to ensure the safety of the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic and documentary evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence submitted by the registered provider the areas of non-compliance under Regulation 16 (h) is addressed. The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs of Children:

The adults interacted with the children in a caring manner and responded to the children's cues for assistance appropriately. The infant's nappies were changed on an individual need's basis. The sleep needs of the children were met. The programme of care for the children attending the preschool room was facilitated predominantly in the outdoor play area. The children were engaged in a range of play based activities in the outdoor play area. The adults supported the older children to be independent whilst using the toilet and with personal care. The children sat together during mealtimes and table-based activities. Drinking water was available and accessible to the children in each room and in the outdoor play areas.

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 and from the service was secured by a bell operated and camera surveillance system to prevent unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- The outdoor play area was secured with fencing and a gate to protect the children within.
- The children were supervised at all times during the inspection.

Infection Control:

- The indoor environment was maintained in a clean condition.

- The children's hands were washed at regular intervals to include after using the toilet, outdoor play and before mealtime.
- Pedal operated lidded bins were available for the disposal of waste.

Non-Compliance Information

Immediate Action Notice:

1. On the 20 January 2026 an Immediate Action Notice 1 was issued to the registered provider to respond to a significant risk found in relation to hot water that was not thermostatically controlled in the service. The recorded temperatures posed a risk of a scald injury to children.

The hot water temperatures at the wash hand basins in the children's sanitary facilities and the nappy changing facility were not thermostatically controlled. The recorded high temperatures of 61.5° Celsius and 51.8° Celsius respectively posed a risk of a scald injury to a child. These temperatures were above the recommended safe temperature of 43° Celsius.

It is acknowledged the registered provider engaged a plumber to remedy this significant risk on the day however the water temperature at the wash hand basin in the nappy changing facility was recorded at a high temperature of 46 ° Celsius in the afternoon following the plumber's intervention.

General Safety:

2. Three trailing electrical cables were noted in the dual purpose sensory/sleep room adjacent to the Toddler room. Children were observed using this room throughout the day for sleep and play purposes. This posed a potential risk of strangulation.
3. Cleaning agents were not stored in a secured area out of reach of the children in the service. A large quantity of toxic cleaning agents, tins of paint and refuse sacs were accessible in an unlocked room which could be accessed by children while playing in the outdoor play area. This posed a potential safety risk should the children access this room. This was brought to the attention of staff and corrective action was taken to mitigate the risk following the inspection.
4. Handrails were not provided on the staircase leading to the first floor. This posed a safety risk to children and adults.

- A pest control bait box was located on the floor in the dual purpose Sensory/Sleep room and accessible to children. This posed a potential risk of harm to children.

Infection Control:

This following posed a potential risk of cross infection and contamination:

- Evidence of rodent activity such as rodent droppings and shredded toilet tissue were observed in the sanitary facility located in the unlocked outdoor room accessed from the outdoor play area. This was brought to the attention of staff and corrective action was taken to mitigate the risk following the inspection.
- Play equipment was inappropriately stored in the nappy changing facility. A clothes rail with a large range of children's dress up costumes was stored next to the waste disposal bin in the nappy changing facility.
- The nappy changing room was used as a passageway by staff to access the Toddler room, the office and the school aged childcare room.

Safe Sleep:

- The ten-minute safe sleep observation records were not completed while five pre-school children slept between 12:00 and 13:00. The safe sleep observation record was completed retrospectively after the inspectors brought this to the attention of the adults.

Fire Safety:

- The bolt which secured the exit gate could not be opened. This posed a risk to both children and staff in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Immediate Action Notice:

- The Plumber revisited the premises and corrected the temperature controls and ensured that all hot water is now at the correct temperature. The water temperature check is included in the daily risk assessment. Regular staff meetings will take place to ensure that staff are aware and are checking the temperature.

General Safety:

- The trailing electrical cables were removed and are no longer a risk. A general safety check is included in the daily risk assessment to ensure that no cables are in reach of children.

3. Cleaning agents are stored in the shed out the back of the premises which is locked. Leaving the key for the shed in the kitchen and making sure in daily risk assessments that the shed is locked at all times.
4. A handrail was put up on the stairs. The registered provider will continue to risk assess.
5. Pest control visited the service and removed the bait box from the sleep room and did a full inspection of the premises. The service will continue to liaise with the pest control company.

Infection Control:

6. The shed was given a deep clean the day after inspection and pest control company came visited the whole creche including the shed. There was no activity found in the shed. The service will continue to work with the pest control company and do anything they recommend.
7. Play equipment was removed from the nappy changing room. Staff were spoken to in relation to items being put in the nappy changing room.
8. The staff were spoken to about using an alternative passage to access the toddler room.

Safe Sleep:

9. The service has purchased a sleep logbook with space for every child to be recorded every 10 minutes of sleep. The registered provider spoke to all staff members in relation to filling this book out as the children fall asleep and every 10 minutes thereafter.

Fire Safety:

10. The registered provider got a new bolt for the gate, so it is now easily opened. This has now been added to the service's daily risk assessment.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Documentary and Photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

Documentary and Photographic evidence.

Safe Sleep:

Documentary and Photographic evidence.

Fire Safety:

Documentary and Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence submitted by the registered provider the areas of non-compliance under Regulation 23 are addressed. The implemented 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 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)

Records of completed fire drills were available. The most recent fire drill took place on the 07 January 2026.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system took place respectively on the 26 August 2025 and the 19 January 2026.

(4)

A fire action notice demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the service was available.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(c)

The service was adequately lit by means of natural lighting supplemented by artificial lighting.

Non-Compliance Information

(c)

The service was not adequately heated and ventilated:

1. There was no ventilation in the nappy changing facility. A strong malodour of soiled nappies was noted in this room after nappy changes.
2. The ambient Toddler room temperatures were not adequately maintained within the recommended care room temperature range of 18 to 22 ° Celsius. In the morning the Toddler room temperature was recorded at 24.7 ° Celsius and in the afternoon the Toddler room temperature at 15.7 ° Celsius.

(e)

The service was not equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities:

3. There were insufficient numbers of wash hand basins available in the nappy changing facility for the thirteen children who required nappy changes on the 20 January 2026.
One wash hand basin was available for use in the nappy changing facility where two wash hand basins were required.
4. Cold water only was available at the wash hand basins in the children’s sanitary facilities and the nappy changing facility until 12:10 when the registered provider was requested to take actions.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c)

1. Mechanical ventilation was added to the nappy changing room.

2. The service contacted the person who installed the heating system who showed the staff how to regulate the temperatures to keep it at a consistent temperature of 21 degrees Celsius. The registered provider will make sure that the mechanical ventilation is in working order, daily.

The service has added this to our daily risk assessment to ensure the heating in all rooms is at a stable 21 degrees.

(e)

3. There was another hand basin added into the nappy changing room.

4. All water in the sinks in the creche have now been adjusted to the correct temperatures.

The service will ensure that the water in the second sink in the nappy room is at an adequate temperature this has now been added to our daily risk assessment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic Evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the corrective and preventive actions and supporting evidence submitted by the registered provider the areas of non-compliance Regulation 29 (c) and (e) are addressed. The implemented actions will be reviewed on next inspection.