

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023MH002
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Name of Service:	Chestnut Daycare Limited
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Address of Service:	Cois Glaisin, Cois Glaisin, Johnstown, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	C15 KRK7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Laura Higgins
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	44
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray & AM. Cunningham
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

Chestnut Daycare is privately owned and is 1 of 6 services operated by the registered providers. The service provides full day care, part time and sessional care to children from 0 to 6 years and operates from 08:00am to 6pm Monday to Friday. Children who are eligible can participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is a purpose-built single storey building consisting of a reception area, office, 4 care rooms, sleep room, cot room, kitchen and sanitary facilities. An outdoor space is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employed a manager, 12 childcare staff and a cook. The registered provider arrived at 11:25am and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

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.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, manager, staff, students 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.

(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 and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Six childcare staff files along with the chef and 5 students files were reviewed. The remainder of the staff files were reviewed at a previous inspection and compliance achieved.

Twenty-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 12 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 available for 3 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Six childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

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

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

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

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

Compliance Information

(1) The adult to child ratios were adequate at all times. There were 10 childcare staff along with 1 agency staff member who worked from 08:00am to 11:30am caring for 44 children. The manager and the registered provider were available to provide relief to the care rooms as needed. There were also 5 students present.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:

The **Wobbler 2 room** had 2 staff members and 1 student with 7 children ranging in age from 1 year to 1 year 11 months all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Toddler 1 room** had 2 staff members and 1 student with 8 children ranging in age from 1 year 11 months to 2 years 6 months all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Toddler 2 room** had 2 staff members and 2 students with 12 children ranging in age from 2 years to 2 years 8 months attending on a full day care basis.

The **Montessori room** had 4 staff members and 1 student with 17 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to school going age attending on a full day care basis. One additional staff member was available to provide relief to the rooms as needed.

(8) (a) According to the staff roster 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Children were observed engaging in tabletop activities, art and crafts and free play with children afforded the opportunity to choose and change activities if they so wish. The curriculum was child led with the themes of the month in the younger age group rooms being "Animals" and "Personal hygiene" with photographs of children's activities displayed in the care rooms Learning Journal. In Toddler 2 room the theme of the week was "Ocean Animals" and in the Montessori room "Jewellery Making" and "Community Helpers". These themes were well supported with arts and craft works displayed.
- The service embraced outdoor play and learning. Children were observed enjoying outdoor play with both their peers and staff members. Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative.
- Children's nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Staff members were responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision provided and gentle reminders regarding hand washing.
- Mealtimes were social occasions with children and adults sitting together, staff provided children with help when needed. Younger children were supported to eat independently, and bibs were worn during

meals to protect the children’s clothes from becoming soiled or wet. Children were assisted to clean their faces and hands at appropriate times. Drinks were readily available within the care rooms.

- Any child who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. During activities children were offered choices and sought out staff members who readily acknowledged and encouraged the children’s efforts and accomplishments.

Supporting relationships around children:

- At snack time jovial conversation was heard between the staff member and children which created a positive atmosphere for developing relationships. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together. Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to a new activity and for mealtimes.
- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with family photographs displayed in the care rooms which gave a sense of identity and belonging. Engagement with families and parents was facilitated by the daily sharing of information at drop off and collection which was supported by electronic means.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.
- (3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-
- (a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Sleep facilities in the service consisted of a cot room which contained 11 standard cots which were used for the younger children requiring sleep. Additionally, stackable beds were placed in a care room solely used for sleep for the older children requiring sleep. Within the care rooms there were mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.

(3)(a) An outdoor space was located to the rear of the building, which was enclosed by walls, had an all-weather surface with 2 secure side gates.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The play resources in the care rooms were accessible, organised and stored on shelving which allowed the children to select and replace materials. The care room had areas of interest which included a home area, construction area, musical play equipment, animal baskets, book rack beside cosy area, plastic/wooden building blocks, puzzles, dolls area, art and crafts materials which included sensory boxes with sand and coloured rice.
- Equipment in the outdoor space included 2 basketball rings with balls, small slide, ride on toys, push along toys, plastic building blocks, cones and a storage box with additional play equipment.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a 3-week menu plan with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, fish and poultry cooked on site. On the day of inspection, the children had a choice of cereals for breakfast. Morning snack was served at 09:30am which consisted of a fruit platter and rice cakes. The main meal of the day was served at 11:30am and consisted of meat balls with gravy, peas and mash potatoes. Evening tea was served at 14:30pm which consisted of turkey wraps with cheese and tomatoes. Additional snacks were available for the children staying until 6pm if required. Water was the drinks of choice with individual cups and water jugs placed in the care rooms.

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 following safety measures were observed in the service:

- On the day of inspection both the indoor and outdoor environment appeared safe. Risk assessments were conducted on a daily basis. The designated person in charge and the staff members had a clear understanding of their role and range of responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.
- All bins for contaminated waste were foot pedal operated.
- Warm water, hand paper towel and liquid soap was available in the children's sanitary facilities.

Safe Sleep:

The following Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Children who were in cots and on sleep beds were supervised by an adequate number of adults at all times.
- A sleep log was maintained on all sleeping children at 10 minutes interval recording their colour, breathing pattern and position.
- The temperature of the cot room and the care room for children requiring sleep over 1 year of age was maintained between the normal range of 18°C to 22°C.

Fire Safety:

The following Fire Safety practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- All emergency exit doors were accessible in the event of an evacuation.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

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) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 21/01/2026.
- (b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment which were last serviced in December 2025
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in different areas on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 70 children at any one time attending the service. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2025 to the 27/03/2026.