

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2023MH002

Name of Service: Chestnut Daycare Limited

Address of Service: Cois Glaisin, Cois Glaisin, Johnstown, Co. Meath

Eircode: C15 KRK7

Name of Registered Provider: Laura Higgins

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 03/03/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	55

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

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 07:30am 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, 5 care rooms, cot room, kitchen and sanitary facilities. An outdoor space is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employed a manager, deputy manager, 12 childcare staff and a cook. Present on the day of inspection were the manager, deputy manager, 11 childcare staff, 2 students and a cook. An additional staff member provided relief cover at dinner time from 11am to 1pm.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19,20,21,22 & 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the following rooms :Toddler rooms 1&2 and Wobbler rooms 1&2 and did not include the Montessori room.

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

The inspection was carried out following receipt of a concern received to the Early Years Inspectorate on the 28/01/2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.

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.
- (c) A clear management structure that identified specific roles of each employee was displayed in the reception area.

(2) (a)&(b) Sixteen staff files along with the 2 students files were reviewed.

Thirty six validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 18 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 8 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Sixteen 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.

(7) (a) All new staff complete an "Induction Form" and receive a "Staff Handbook" which outlines the policies and procedures of the service. The staff document that they have read all policies and procedures.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) Police vetting application was submitted on the 04/04/2025 for this staff member and will be forwarded to the inspectorate when received. Police vetting check has been added to the staff members induction checklist.

Supporting documentation submitted

Application for police vetting.

Staff members induction checklist.

Summary Comment

As no police vetting has been received to the inspectorate this non-compliance remains outstanding. It is acknowledged that an application has been made for police vetting. The registered provider has not addressed the non-compliances.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

1. The registered provider ensured that the following written policies specified in Schedule 5 were comprehensive to ensure the welfare and safety of the children attending the service.

- A Fire Safety Policy.
- Safe Sleep Policy.
- Complaints Policy.
- Staff Induction Policy.

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) On the morning of the inspection there was a manager, deputy manager, 11 childcare staff and 2 students working directly with the 55 children attending the service. The adult to child ratios were adequate at all times with an additional staff member available from 11am to 1pm to provide support with meals and nappy changing. The manager was also available to provide assistance and to supervised sleep in the sleep room while staff members were having their lunch.

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

The **Wobbler 1 room** had 2 staff members with 4 children ranging in age from 1 year to 1 year 3 months all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Wobbler 2 room** had 3 staff members with 8 children ranging in age from 1 year 3 months to 2 years all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Toddler 1 room** had 2 staff members and 1 student with 10 children ranging in age from 1 year 6 months to 2 years 6 months all attending on a full day care basis.

The **Toddler 2 room** had 2 staff members and 1 student with 12 children ranging in age from 2 years 6 months to 3 years attending on a full day care basis.

The **Montessori room** had 3 staff members with 21 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to school going age attending on a full day care basis.

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

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.

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis.

Compliance Information

(1)(h) A record was maintained of each child's attendance on a daily basis indicating arrival and departure times.

(1) A staff roster was maintained on a daily basis indicating the staff members arrival and departure times throughout the day.

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:

- The staff members sat with the children at snack and dinner time helping the children when required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- In the Wobbler and Toddler rooms any child who became upset or who were settling in were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. Children were placed to sleep at the service designated sleep time after dinner at 12md.
- 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 assistance given if required.
- Children were observed being allowed to self-direct their own play. The children were afforded the opportunity to choose activities and to follow through on their choices and change activities if they so wish.
- The children in the Toddler rooms were observed enjoying outdoor play with both their peers and staff members.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members communicated with parents through an electronic device and verbally on a daily basis regarding activities pertaining to their children. Children and parents were greeted at drop off and collection with friendly conversation overheard. The staff encouraged the children to engage positively with each other by adopting simple social rules such as turn taking, sharing in play activities and resolving minor disputes.
- Transitions were handled smoothly as the children were given ample time to complete one activity before starting the next. Overall, the children appeared comfortable, happy and relaxed in their environment.

Non-Compliance Information

In Toddler 1 & 2 rooms the following were observed:

1. Family photographs on the walls were displayed too high and not at the child's eye level. The children did not get the benefits of seeing their family photos which created a sense of comfort, safety, pride and familiarity.
2. Children's drinks were stored in a basket on a shelving unit out of reach of children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. An extra family collage has been added to the walls in the Toddler 1&2 rooms.
2. Children's drinks are now accessible to the children in both rooms.

A risk assessment has been conducted and the above practices will be discussed at the next staff meeting.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the following:

1. Family collage in both rooms at a child's eye level.
2. Children's drinks on low level shelving within reach of children.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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 consists of a separate sleep room which contains 10 standard cots which was used for the younger children requiring sleep. Additionally, stackable beds were placed on the floor for the older

children requiring sleep in both the Wobbler Room 1 and Toddler Room 2 which were solely used for sleep after dinner.

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

Materials and equipment were available on low level shelving in the care rooms. Children were observed to access the materials independently.

Equipment in the outdoor space included 2 activity tray, 2 basketball rings, small slide, ride on toys, push along toys, plastic building blocks, cones and children's table and chairs.

Non-Compliance Information

1. In the Wobbler 1 & 2 rooms and the Toddler 1 & 2 rooms the following was observed:

Areas of interest were poorly developed with little supporting equipment and materials to enhance the themed areas for example:

- In **Wobbler 1 room** which can accommodate up to 5 children attending on any 1 day, the animal basket had no animal shed or other farm equipment. There were 3 wooden puzzles.
- In the **Wobbler 2 room** which can accommodate up to 10 children attending on any 1 day there were 3 dolls with no dress up clothes, no prams or buggies or associated play equipment. There were 2 wooden puzzles. The kitchen had 4 play utensils.
- In the **Toddler 1 room and Toddler 2 room** the play grill and oven had no play equipment and the kitchen had minimal plastic play equipment.
- In the care rooms the equipment and materials were placed on linear shelving and in baskets with no visual labelling.

- In all care rooms and in the outdoor space there was no sensorial play materials available e.g. sand/water play.
- In the outdoor space there was no basketball available for the basketball ring.

The physical indoor and outdoor environment should be stimulating, challenging, diverse, creative and provide an enriching experience for all children to ensure meaningful sustained play. Regulation 21 was non-compliant on the last inspection on 15/05/2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Additional equipment has been added to the Wobbler 1 & 2 rooms and the Toddler 1 & 2 rooms to support the areas of interest. A tuff tray has been added to the outdoor space to facilitate sensorial play. Basketballs have also been replaced.

Staff have been reminded to check all equipment on a daily basis and to report to the manager if additional equipment is required.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of additional equipment in the care rooms and in the outdoor areas to support areas of interest.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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 for the children attending the full day care service with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, fish and poultry cooked on site. All children attending the sessional service brought their own lunch. 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, crackers and cheese. The main meal of the day was served at 11:30am and consisted of salmon pasta bake with broccoli. Evening tea was served at 14:45pm which consisted of banana

sandwiches and fruit smoothies. 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

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 sleep room was maintained between the normal range of 16°C to 20°C and the temperature of the care rooms used for sleep were maintained between the normal range of 18°C to 22°C while children were sleeping.

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.
- Staff members had up to date Fire Safety Training.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. On the day of the inspection the following was observed:

- Staff did not wash their hands after cleaning children’s noses. The nearest sink available was down the corridor in the children’s sanitary facilities.
- Staff and children’s hands were not washed after nappy changing.

Safe Sleep:

2. On the day of the inspection the following was observed:

- Stackable beds were placed on the floor in the sleep room along with 10 cots. There was not adequate space in the sleep room to accommodate the number of cots and beds.
- There was not 50 cm between each cot and sleep bed, children could easily reach each other which posed a safety risk.
- There were 2 sleep beds in front of 2 cots which would obstruct access to the children in the cots in the event of an evacuation needed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The importance of handwashing has been discussed with all staff members. The nappy changing policy has been sent to all staff members and extra gloves have been added to each care room for handling body fluids. Random checks regarding the procedure of nappy changing has been conducted with each staff member.

Safe Sleep:

2. Stackable beds for the older children requiring sleep are now placed in the Wobbler room to allow more space in the sleep room

Supporting documentation submitted

Nappy changing policy.

Nappy changing procedure risk assessment.

Photographic evidence of stackable beds placed on the floor of the Wobbler room.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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 25/02/2025.

(b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment which were last serviced on the 02/12/2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in 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 for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2024 to the 27th March 2025.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)&(c) A Complaints Policy and a Complaints Log were available for the service.