

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024LS001		
Name of Service:	Caterpillars Childcare Ballaghmore ELC		
Address of Service:	St. Molua's Church, Ballinla, Borris-in-Ossory, Co. Laois		
Eircode:	R32 RC52		
Name of Registered Provider:	Grainne Harte		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	08/05/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM 14
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.		
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy		
Title:	Early Years Inspector		

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

The service is registered as a full day care service to accommodate children aged 0 to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 07:30 and 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is part of a multiple. The Early Years' Service is located in a single-storey purposely adapted and renovated premises. Three pre-school rooms, a kitchen and a sleep room are provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the front of the premises. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available. The service is situated in a rural area in Ballaghmore, County Laois.

Staffing

The registered provider, the co-owner, the centre manager, a cook and five childcare practitioners were present during on 08 May 2024. The registered provider and the co-owner do not work directly with the children but were present during the inspection and part of the closing meeting. The quality assurance specialist attended the service in the afternoon and was present during the absence of the registered provider for the closing meeting.

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 an initial announced inspection 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the registered provider, co-owner, centre manager, quality assurance specialist, 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.*

(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)

The centre manager and a person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

The centre manager was present for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider, co-owner and quality assurance specialist were present at intervals throughout the inspection.

The files of twelve adults including the registered provider, co-owner and quality assurance specialist were reviewed. The following was noted;

(2)(a)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers in respect of the staff members.

(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from a source other than a past employer in respect of the staff members.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

- (3)
- The procedures in respect (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) were carried out by the registered provider prior to the employment of staff.
- (4)
- The staff members working directly with children as part of the adult to child ratio held qualifications at level 5 and 6 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*
- (a) a sessional pre-school service, and*
 - (b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- The ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.
- (4)(a)(b)
- There were fifteen children attending the session supervised directly by six adults.
- (8)(a)
- The staff roster indicated that two adults are 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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

Information for parents was available in a parent handbook and shared electronically prior to commencement in service in respect of Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured a copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013) of the Act and Regulations was available for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

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)

A cook prepares and serves all meals and snacks. A menu plan was available for review. The main meal consisted of a savoury mince containing beef, tomatoes and mixed vegetables which was served with either pasta for the older children or mashed potato for the younger children. Children drank from their own water bottles during meals and snacks. Freshly prepared scones were on the menu for the afternoon snack. Adaptations were made for the younger children and those with dietary requirements. The staff sat with small groups of children, providing support and offering assistance as required. Younger children were encouraged to feed themselves. Bibs were provided to help the children to be clean and comfortable. After the main meal children slept in cots or floor mats depending on their age and were physically checked by staff every ten minutes.

A staff biography "our team" was noted in the entrance area of the service. Staff were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. Children were content with their carers and staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Staff interacted well with young children during nappy changing by making eye contact, singing songs and smiling.

The service worked in partnership with parents. A handheld electronic device is used to record information relating to the children's activities and daily life in the service. This information is available to the parent in real time. A verbal handover was observed between a parent and staff member at collection time.

A range of developmentally appropriate experiences were available for all children. Areas of interest were noted in the pre-school rooms and included home areas, construction areas, arts and crafts, dress up, sand play and small world items. Materials included paint, play dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws and shape sorters. Children attending the pre-school and toddler rooms were observed to enjoy free play and organised games in the outdoor area.

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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016 shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, sensory play and home corners.

(b)

A separate sleep room for children under the age of two and equipped with four standard cots was available in the service. Two additional cots were provided in the baby room. Individual floor mats were available in the service for any child over the age of two years who required rest or sleep. Soft furnishings were available in each pre-school room for rest and relaxation by the children.

(2)(a)

An outdoor area was available to the front of the service consisting of an all-weather absorbent artificial grass surface. A high-level wire fence secured the perimeter of the outdoor play area. The play space can be accessed directly via a door from the main corridor within the premises. A variety of stationary play equipment and outdoor toys were available.

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 main entrance door to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. A coded system was in place for access to the service. The Inspector signed the visitor book in the entrance area of the service. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after toileting. The nappy changing practice observed was carried out in line with appropriate infection control practices.

Soothers were stored in individually labelled containers.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school rooms and in the associated sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

A fridge was available for the storage of non-perishable goods in the pre-school rooms.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered at the time of the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature. Records were in place in respect of any prescription or nonprescription medication administered to children.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in a sleep log maintained in the sleep room. The sleep room temperature noted on the service temperature monitor was 20 °Celsius.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed throughout the service. A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the premises.

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 seven adults rostered and present held certificates in paediatric first aid. The registered provider who was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) was not rostered but was present between the hours of 10:00 and 14:45.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in an accessible and conspicuous location along the main corridor in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

An adult qualified in first aid response (FAR) was not available in the premises between the hours of 07:30 and 10:00 and again between 14:45 and 18:00.

To mitigate against the risk, the registered provider on the evening of the inspection submitted evidence to indicate to the early years inspector that a FAR qualified staff member was rostered to be on duty during the hours of operation on the 09.05.24 with first aid response (FAR) training scheduled to take place commencing on 11.05.24 for staff in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)

Two staff from the Ballaghmore service completed FAR training on May 10, 11 and 13 2024. (FAR certificates included). FAR training will be maintained every two years.

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The most recent fire drill was recorded as taking place on 21 March 2024.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. Records were available in respect of the firefighting equipment which was installed in January 2024. A commissioning certificate was available in respect of the smoke alarms in the premises installed in December 2023.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the entrance hall and in the pre-school rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 21 March 2024. The lack of regular monthly fire drill practice may impede the safe evacuation of children in the event of a fire in the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a)

A fire drill was carried out on 13 May 2024. (Fire drill record included).
Monthly fire drill practice will be carried out in the service.

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted as 27 March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

(e)

Since the fit for purpose inspection on 02 February 2024 three water closets, two nappy changing units and five wash hand basins have been provided in sanitary accommodation for use by children. The sanitary accommodation area is ventilated by means of mechanical ventilation and or natural ventilation in the form of openable windows. All sanitary accommodation was stocked with a sufficient supply of liquid soap, paper hand towel, disposable gloves and aprons.