

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS007
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Name of Service:	Chuckleberries
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Address of Service:	55 Hunters Walk, Hunterswood, Ballycullen, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D24 VK44
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Name of Registered Provider:	Barbara Thornberry
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	48	PM	23
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Level 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Kilmainham Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	R Phillips and R Brien
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).

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Description of service

Chuckleberries is one of two Early year's services operated by the registered provider. It provides sessional childcare in Montessori rooms 1,2,3 and 6 from 09:00-12:00 Monday to Friday. The service participates in the Early Childcare and Education scheme (ECCE). It provides full day care to the children attending Montessori rooms 2 and 5 between 07:15-18:00 Monday – Thursday and from 07:15-16:30 on Fridays. There are six care rooms in the service, but five were open on the day of the inspection. Chuckleberries is registered to provide childcare to children from two to six years of age.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 21 staff including a manager, assistant manager, 13 early years educators, a chef, relief chef, kitchen assistant and two school age staff. There were eleven staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection, supported by a manager and assistant manager. The registered provider was present on the day of inspection. She does not work directly with the children. There were two school age staff, a chef and an adult assisting in the kitchen present also.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

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9 (1)(2)(3)(4) Management and recruitment,
11(1)(4)(8)(a) Staffing levels,
16(1)(h)(i)(j)(k), (3)
19 (1) (b) Health Welfare and Development of the child,
23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child, and
25 First Aid

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16(1)(h)(j)(k) Record in Relation to a Preschool Service and 19(1)(b) Health Welfare and Development of Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Montessori 2 and Montessori 5 rooms, and a sample of Accident and Incident forms and Medicine administration forms.

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, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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.*

(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)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required, who were both on the premises throughout the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management system in place and staff demonstrated awareness of staff roles and responsibilities within the service.

(2) Following a discussion with the person in charge it was confirmed that six new staff were employed in the service since the last inspection on 7 October 2024. Documentation was reviewed in full in respect of these new staff. The files of three staff from the registered providers other service, who provide relief cover and were present on the day, were also reviewed.

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Regulatory requirements were met as follows:

- (a) There was documentary evidence of fifteen validated references from previous employers.
- (b) There were three validated references from a reputable source available.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána for all adults employed in the service, the registered provider was compliant with Tusla's regulatory notice to renew Garda Vetting every three years also.
- (d) International Police Vetting was available for six staff members who had lived outside of the Irish jurisdiction for six months or more as adults.
- (3) The processes referred to in paragraph 2 above were carried out prior to the employee's commencing work in the service.
- (4) Records were available evidencing that six of the adults employed to work directly with the children, and a seventh adult who is working in the kitchen assisting, held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum level five 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.*
- (3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*
- (4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*

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(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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (2)(4) The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care and sessional services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were eleven adults caring directly for 46 children at the busiest time in the service, and six adults caring for 23 children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) There were more than two adults present throughout the inspection, and the roster indicated that there were two adults present at all times of opening.

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;
(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.

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(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(h) Details of the attendance of each child were recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service in the rooms sampled.

(i) The staff roster was available and accurately reflected the adults working in the service on the day of inspection.

(j) A sample of 19 medicine administration forms were reviewed. These contained the pertinent information required for safe medicine administration and were signed by two staff members and parents as required.

(k) A sample of 11 accident and incident records were reviewed. These were signed by staff management and parents and completed appropriately.

(3) The records referred to in part (1) above were made available to the inspectors.

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The care rooms were spacious and arranged into areas of interest providing the children the freedom to play and explore. Activities were child led, with ample Montessori and play equipment accessible to the children to choose from.

There was a key worker system in place with the adults demonstrating good knowledge of each child's needs and preferences. The staff spoke kindly to the children who seemed very comfortable in their care.

There was water available to the children throughout the inspection, and they were served meals at regular intervals. They enjoyed a hot meal at lunchtime sitting with the staff and chatting in a relaxed manner throughout the meal. The children were provided with additional portions of food as required. Staff were aware of the children's food preferences and sensitivities and demonstrated inclusion of all the children. The children's independence was encouraged, and they were praised for clearing their plates and disposing of waste

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appropriately. The children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and supervised by sight and sound as appropriate.

All the children present on the day of inspection were three years or over. Staff described the availability of facilities for the children to sleep in the care rooms should any child require a nap.

Transitions were well managed throughout the day by staff letting the children know what was going to happen. The children's transition to this service is supported during the summer by introducing the younger children from the other service gradually, so they get to know the new environment and staff gradually before September.

There was evidence in the care room of staff completing transition to primary school forms for children going to school in September also.

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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered provider and staff members to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service.

General Safety:

The entrance and exit and outdoor areas were secured to prevent any child leaving the service unattended and preventing unauthorised persons from accessing the service.

The toys and play equipment observed in use on the day of inspection were in good working order.

Blind cords were secured and cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children. The storage area and kitchen were inaccessible to children.

There were no hazards identified in the outdoor area.

Infection Control:

There was warm water, liquid soap and paper towels available to the children in the sanitary area.

Staff were observed cleaning the tables before and after meals.

Children were observed washing their hands on return from outdoor play, before eating and after using the toilet.

Staff who supported children to change their clothing when soiled, used personal protective equipment and washed their hands.

Administration of Medication:

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No children were observed being given medicine on the day of inspection. Staff demonstrated an understanding of the procedure to follow in the event that a child may require medicine. Individual care plans for children requiring medicine were reviewed and contained the pertinent information to inform safe care.

Medicines were in date and stored in their original packaging out of reach of children in a conspicuous location.

Fire Safety:

The fire exits were signposted and unobstructed throughout the service.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that the service doesn't bring children on outings. They do have an annual sports day on a local green area, for which the service has a risk assessment and obtains consent from parents in advance.

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) It was confirmed by review of staff files, and discussion with the person in charge that six staff held in date First Aid Responder (FAR) training certificates. The roster evidenced that one or more were available to the children at all times of opening.

(2)(a) Adequately equipped first aid boxes were stored in conspicuous locations that were easily accessible throughout the service. There was a small portable first aid pouch in each care room, and a larger box outside the kitchen.

(b) The first aid boxes were available to the children in the service at all times.