

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK039
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Name of Service:	Castle Creche
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Address of Service:	Coolbawn Meadows, Castleconnell, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 Y058
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Costello
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	26/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	42	PM	38
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne and J Ryan
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

This is an early years creche which first opened in July 2008. It is a private service which provides sessional, part-time and full day care to preschool children aged 6 months - 6 years of age.

The service operates from 07.30hrs to 18.00hrs and the setting caters for a maximum of 72 preschool children.

The service has 4 playrooms, sleep rooms, adult and children's sanitary facilities, an office and kitchen on the premises. There is a large outdoor area to the rear and back of the premises.

A school aged service is also provided to children attending the local primary school.

Staffing

There are 15 staff members including the registered provider, the manager and an administrator employed in the service.

On the day of inspection there were 5 staff members with qualifications rostered and working directly with the preschool children across 4 playrooms. An additional staff member with childcare qualification was rostered on duty at 11:15 am to 15:15pm. There were 2 staff members without childcare qualifications rostered and working in the playrooms with the preschool children.

The registered provider was rostered to be off on the day of the inspection however arrived at the facility at 10:30 am and was available to cover meal breaks and office duties as required.

There were 2 staff members available to work with the school aged children and cover kitchen duties.

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:

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- 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.

Regulation 9(1)(a)(b)(c) 2(a)(b)(c)(d)(3) (4)

Regulation 11(2)

Regulation 19(1a)

Regulation 23

Regulation 25

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

This inspection was informed by information received into the Early Years Inspectorate.

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

(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 registered provider had a named person in charge and a deputy available who were able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection the deputy was present, and the registered provider arrived at the premises at 10:30 am. The staff roster indicated that the registered provider or the deputy were available on the premises.

(2) The files of all 15 staff members working in the service were reviewed.

(a) There were 23 of the required 30 written references from previous employers on file.

There were 19 of the required 30 validations from previous employers on file.

(b) There were 5 of the required 30 written references submitted by staff from sources other than past employers.

There were 3 of the required 30 validations submitted by staff from sources other than past employers.

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(c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for all the staff employed to work in the service.

The Garda vetting for the staff was dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting, published by the inspectorate in September 2023 and effective from 1st of January 2024.

(d) Police vetting was available for the 5 staff members who had resided outside of jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) There were 10 staff members with the appropriate childcare qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and validated references were not in place for 1 staff member who commenced working in the service in August 2025.

There were 6 validations from previous employers and from sources other than past employers where documentary evidence was not available to demonstrate validation.

(3) All of the required vetting documentation was not furnished to the registered provider prior to each staff member taking up employment at the service. This could pose a risk to the health and safety of children when appropriate vetting of staff has not taken place prior to being allowed access to children.

(4) There were 2 staff members working directly with the preschool children that did not have evidence of an appropriate childcare qualification in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

One of these staff was working in the service since August 2025 and the second staff was working in the service since October 2025.

Staff members working without an appropriate qualification could impact on the care provided to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action: The registered provider has stated in the Corrective and Preventive (CAPA) form that:

(2)(a)(b)

The two written and verified references were submitted for the 1 staff member who had commenced working in the service in August 2025.

Copies of the 6 validations on references from previous employers and from sources other than past employers are now on file in the service.

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(3) All the required vetting documentation for the staff has been furnished to the inspectorate and are on file in the service.

The service will ensure that measures will be in place to ensure all the required documentation for newly appointed staff will be obtained and on file before being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) One of the two staff members will have completed a childcare qualification in a number of weeks.

No member of staff will be allowed to work directly with children, unless they are qualified going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of the 2 written and verified references and copies of the outstanding verifications were submitted to Early Years inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was assessed and points (2) (a) and (b) have been addressed and this now meets the regulatory requirements.

Point (3) This now meets the requirements and will need to be assessed on the next review of the service.

Point (4) This remains non-compliant as the registered provider has not demonstrated that the 2 staff members have completed an appropriate qualification.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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.

Compliance Information

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 7 staff working across 4 playrooms rooms with 42 pre-school children present in the morning and 6 staff working with 38 preschool children present in the afternoon.

The minimum ratio of staff to children were working directly with the children in each room.

- There were 8 preschool children (0-2 years of age) and 2 staff in the Baby/Toddler playroom.
- There were 8 preschool children (1-3 years of age) and 2 staff in Toddler playroom.

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- There were 10 preschool children (3-5 years of age) and 1 staff in the Montessori playroom.
- There were 15 preschool children (2.8months -3 years of age) and 2 staff in the Preschool playrooms.

A relief staff were available from 11:15 to 15:15 am to cover staff breaks and the registered provider was also available from 10:30 am to cover breaks and other duties.

A designated person was available to prepare, cook and serve food to the preschool children attending the service from 09:00 to 13:00 hrs and available to care for the school aged children from 13:30 to 17:30pm

There was one additional staff assigned to the care of the school aged children from 14:30 to 17:30 pm

There was a staff available to cover the administrative duties.

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

Basic Needs:

There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service to encourage and educate the children about the importance of good nutrition. The service supplied a hot meal for the preschool children attending parttime or full day care. Children's drinks were easily accessible to them throughout the day. The staff sat with the children during mealtimes to give examples of positive social skills. There were two nappy changing facilities accessible for the younger children who required nappy changing in the Pre Toddler and Toddler playrooms. Nappies were changed in a timely manner.

The older children had unrestricted access to the toilets which were located next to the Montessori and Preschool playrooms.

Lots of soft seating and rest areas were evident in each room for children to relax and rest, if time away from active play was needed.

Physical and Material Environment:

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The playrooms were bright spacious areas which provided the children with lots of clear floor space for movement and play. Each playroom was subdivided into interests' areas using low level open shelving units. Lots of age-appropriate, open ended play materials were easily accessible to the children such as sand and rice in the Toddlers playroom. Children's artwork was displayed on the walls around the rooms.

A home corner with cooker, dolls, prams, and utensils provided an area for imaginative play.

Low level tables and chairs were accessible for mealtimes and for tabletop activities. Highchairs were in place in the Pre-Toddlers playroom.

There were couches in each playroom together with soft floor mats, pillows and cushions available to create quiet rest areas within the rooms.

Outdoor play was facilitated for the older children from the Montessori and Preschool room in the outdoor area adjacent to the rooms. Children were dressed in coats and hats to stay warm when heading outside to play. A range of materials were available to support children's play, movement, learning and exploration exclusive to the outside.

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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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The following posed a risk to the safety and well-being of children.
 - There were 3 preschool children between the age of 1 to 2 years of age each observed to be given a bottle of formula milk while settling in their cot just before a sleep. Staff did not remain in the room while the children drank their bottles. This practice may have posed a safety risk to the children of choking or suffocation. The staff advised that this was the practice with these children. This was at variance with the Safe sleep policy for the service which stated that “no bottles should be in the cot.”

Infection Control:

2. The following practice was observed which posed a risk of cross infection.
 - A staff member working in the Toddler was observed not to wash her hands after each nappy changing procedure. The staff only changed their apron and gloves after each nappy change.
 - This was at variance with the nappy changing procedure for the service which stated “always wash hands after changing a child.”
 - The children’s hands were not observed to be washed following each nappy change.

Safe Sleep:

3. Safe sleep checks were not carried out in line with the service safe sleep policy.
 - Staff in the Pre-Toddler room completed checks on sleeping toddlers by looking through the window panel on the sleep room door as opposed to entering the room. A child placed in its cot was not checked at 10-minute intervals as it was put in its cot at approximately 10.30 hrs and wasn’t physically checked by staff until 11.30 hrs.

This was at variance with the safe sleep policy which stated, “physical checks are made of each of the sleeping children and use of viewing panel for monitoring is only useful in detecting if a child is upset or crying between the 10 minutes checks or for security”.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety: The registered provider has stated in the Corrective and Preventive (CAPA) form that:

The service management have reviewed the "Safe sleep policy "with all the staff caring for preschool children aged 1- to 2-year-olds.

No bottles will be given to the children while in their cots or when they are going down to sleep.

Infection Control: The registered provider has stated in the CAPA form that:

The service management have reviewed the "Nappy changing policy "with all staff and the managers are carrying out daily checks to make sure the policy is being adhere to.

Safe Sleep: The registered provider has stated in the CAPA form that:

The service management have reviewed the "Safe sleep policy "with all staff who are involved in putting children to sleep and them. The manager will carry out checks bi-weekly to ensure the policy is being adhere to.

The service management team will do regular checks and will review the sleep and nappy changing policy every few months with the staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

No

Summary Comment

The response was assessed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 23, General Safety, Infection control and Safe Sleep.

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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) There were 4 staff members working in the service who had up to date training in first aid response for children.

(2)(a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes available and easily accessible on site in the preschool facility.

(b) The first aid boxes were available to the children attending the pre-school service.