

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020TY003
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Name of Service:	Caterpillars Childcare Killeen
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Address of Service:	Killeen, Templederry, Nenagh, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 EY15
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Name of Registered Provider:	Grainne Harte
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	49
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary, E45A099
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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).

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Description of service

This full day care service was established in 2020 to provide care and education to children aged between 0 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided.

The service operates Monday – Friday, 7am – 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour sessional service funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from a former primary school in the village of Killeen in north Tipperary. The premises is a detached, single storey building with five activity rooms, kitchen, two sleep rooms, office and extensive grounds with three separate outdoor play spaces.

This service is one of four services in north Tipperary and one in Laois operated by the registered provider under the name ‘Caterpillars Childcare’.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service on a daily basis but is available to call on when required. The service manager is the person in charge on a daily basis. There are 14 staff employed in the service, including childcare staff, staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM), school age care staff, catering staff and two childcare students.

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

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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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4), 10, 11(1)(2), 17, 19(1)(a), 22 and 26.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 10 Policies and Procedures of Pre-School Service.

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 cooperation of the 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.*

(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 manager was the person in charge on the day of inspection. There was a named person who could deputise in her absence.

(b) A review of the staff roster and attendance records indicated that the person in charge or her deputy were present in the service while it was in operation.

The staff in the service included the registered provider and 14 staff. There were two new staff employed in the service since the last inspection in July 2025. The two new staff were employed in the school age care service and doing work experience for their child care courses in the early years service. The garda vetting renewal for nine staff and the registered provider was assessed on the day of inspection.

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(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the two new members of staff.

(b) Not applicable as available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members and the registered provider. Staff were re-vetted on a three yearly basis in line with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

(4) Staff employed to work with the pre-school children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6, 8 or 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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

The following policies and procedures were available and reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain the necessary information:

- Complaints policy
- Inclusion policy
- Risk management policy
- Supervision 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.

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Compliance Information

(1) On the morning of the inspection there were 52 children aged between 1 and 5 years old being supervised by 9 staff across 5 activity rooms as follows:

Baby room: 10 children aged 1-2 years old and 1 child aged 2 years old with 3 staff.

Toddler room: Six children aged 2-3 years old and six children aged 3 years old with two staff.

Preschool room 1: 10 children aged 3-5 years old with 2 staff.

Preschool room 2: 10 children aged 3-5 years old and 1 staff.

Preschool room 3: Nine children aged 3-5 years old and one staff.

There were also two childcare students working in the rooms who were not included in the adult to child ratios.

The member of catering staff who worked in the kitchen was not included in the adult to child ratios either.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the minimum requirements.

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

The service used a variety of methods to share required information with parents of children attending the service. The service had a website that included a Parents Handbook with information regarding the age profile of the service, opening hours, fees, facilities available, type of care programme provided and the main policies, procedures and statements of the service relevant to the children. Details of the name, position, qualifications and experience of each member of staff was displayed in the service. The service also used an electronic application designed for childcare services to communicate with parents and share important information including policies and procedures.

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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 was observed through direct observation, review of records and discussions with staff:

Basic needs:

The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors and outdoors. The children from the Toddler room and Preschool rooms were taken outside to play several times during the day. There was a triple buggy and four single buggies available in the service for taking the children from the Baby room for walks.

The children were served with meals and drinks throughout the day, in line with the daily menu. The children sat together at tables in their rooms at mealtimes. There were a mixture of high and low chairs in the Baby room, the choice of which was used was based on each child's level of development and their personal preference.

Highchairs were placed in a circle so that the children could see each other and interact with each other while they ate. Staff sat at the children's eye-level when spoon-feeding them. Staff sat with the children in each room during mealtimes and gave assistance to children who required it. Children were given as much time as they needed to eat.

The sanitary accommodation areas were located within the activity rooms which supported easy access to the toilets and hand washing sinks. Children who were not yet toilet-trained had their nappies changed regularly and as often as required.

The staff were observed to support the children to develop independence in self-care skills such as self-feeding, using the toilet, taking off and putting on their shoes and outdoor clothing, tidying up after meals and playtime, washing their hands, wiping their noses and caring for their belongings.

Supporting relationships:

The children were cared for by the same team of staff each day which supported them to develop secure relationships with their carers. Staff demonstrated a knowledge of each child's likes, abilities and interests. The

daily schedules were adapted when required to respond to the children's emergent interests or needs, such as the longer period of outdoor play on the day of inspection as the weather was fine and the children enjoyed being outside.

Parents were made welcome at drop off and collection times and were kept informed of their child's activities, meals, sleep and other routines through an electronic application which also allowed staff to share photos of the children with their parents.

The service produced regular newsletters to inform parents of special events in the service in the recent past or planned for the future.

Physical and material environment:

The service was well resourced with a wide range of toys and materials both indoors and outdoors. Each room was set up with tables, chairs and child accessible storage units. Interest areas in each room included a cosy area and library, home corner, art and craft area, tray tables set up with special interest activities, construction area, small world area, sensory play and manipulative play.

There were cots, floor beds and stackable beds available for the children who slept during the day. The cots were set up in the Baby room or in one of the two sleep rooms. Floor beds and stackable beds with individual fitted sheets were set up in the Toddler room after dinner. Each child knew their own bed and went to it and laid down on it once it was set up and they were ready to sleep.

There were three outdoor play areas around the service: a large playing field at the back, a green area and ball court on one side and an enclosed playground on the other. On the day of inspection the children all played in the enclosed playground, which had a small, covered area sectioned off for use by younger children when older children were also outside. When all of the children from the pre-school rooms were outside together, they used this space as well as the rest of the playground. There was a covered shed for sheltered play in one corner of the playground where there was a tap for accessing water for messy play. Play resources included: a wooden unit with treehouse, steps and slides; wooden bus; balance bridge; ride on toys; play house; push toys and sand box. The children also played games with rules such as 'simon says' and 'the farmer wants a wife'.

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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 healthy eating policy. Menus were developed each month in line with the healthy eating policy and took into account the children's likes/dislikes as well as the season. All meals and snacks were provided by the service. Some children brought a packed lunch to eat at the morning break. Infant formula was reconstituted at home and brought into the service in individual bottles and stored in the fridge in the Baby room until required, in line with best practice guidelines.

There was a member of staff dedicated to planning menus and preparing, cooking and serving meals.

The children brought their own drink bottles that were refilled with water when empty. The children could access drinks throughout the day.

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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 8 May 2026.

(b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms. Firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on an annual basis, most recently in September and November 2025 respectively.

(4) There were notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed on the walls throughout the service.