

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC128
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Name of Service:	Goldfinch Early Education Limited
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Address of Service:	Cregane, Buttevant, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P51 T862
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Name of Registered Provider:	Donna Cullen
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	49	PM	47
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue
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

Goldfinch Early Education Limited provides full day care, part-time and sessional services. The service is registered to operate from 7.00am until 6.00pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning between the hours of 9.00am until 12 noon, term time only. The service accommodates children aged from 0 to 6 years and a school age service is also available. The registered provider operates multiple services.

The premises are located near Buttevant, a rural town in north Cork. It is a single storey, purpose built childcare service comprising of an entrance area leading to a main corridor off which there are four care rooms namely Butterfly, Caterpillar, Buzzy Bees and Baby Bunny. A kitchen, storage area, dedicated sleep room and sanitary facilities for both adults and children are also located in this area. There are three secure outdoor play areas available, and a car park is located at the side of the service.

Staffing

There were 16 staff attached to the service on day of inspection. This included the registered provider who is not service based, person in charge, 12 childcare assistants, one school age staff and one contractor who visits the service occasionally.

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. 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 cooperation of the person in charge, 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.
- (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.

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection. In the event the person or deputy person in charge were not on the premises, a named person able to deputise was available.
 - (b) Through review of the staff rota a person in charge or named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
 - (c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included person in charge, deputy person in charge and childcare assistants.
- (2) Nine adults had commenced employment at the service since the previous inspection on the 15th of August 2024. Recruitment records in respect of these adults were therefore examined. It was also identified that two Garda vetting disclosures were due for renewal, these were also open to inspection.
- (a) Of the 18 references required, 16 validated references were from past employers.
 - (b) Of the 18 references required, 2 validated references were from an alternative source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 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 deemed to be required for three of the nine new adults working in the service. All required documentation was available and on file for the three adults.
- (3) The registered provider ensured to carry out all checks and validations mentioned in (9) (2) prior to the adults commencing in the service.
- (4) The seven new adults working directly with the children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times.

(2) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

- In the Baby Bunnies in the morning, there were two staff working with five children aged between 1 year and 2 months and 1 year and 8 months of age, all attending full day care. In the afternoon there were two staff working with five children.
- In the Buzzy Bees in the morning, there were 3 staff working with 13 children aged between 1 year and 6 months and 3 years and 3 months of age, all attending full day care. In the afternoon there were 3 staff working with 13 children.
- In the Caterpillars in the morning, there were 3 staff working with 16 children aged between 2 years and 3 months and 3 years and 10 months of age, all attending full day care. In the afternoon there were 3 staff working with 15 children.
- In the Butterflies in the morning a mix of school age children and early years children were present. There were 3 staff working with 15 early years children and 2 school age children aged between 3 and 5 years of age, all attending full day care. In the afternoon there were 3 staff working with 14 early years children and 2 school age children.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times during the service operation hours. This was evident through the staff rota and staff sign in.

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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)

Basic needs:

- Staff supported children with toileting. Staff encouraged independence and provided support as required. Children's nappies were changed frequently and as needed throughout the day.
- Children had access to soft tissues to clean their noses themselves. Staff were observed cleaning children's faces after meals and throughout the day.
- Drink bottles of water were brought in from home, children had access to these bottles at all times and were stored on child height shelving. These were brought outdoors with the children and regularly filled throughout the day.
- Staff provided support to children that needed help when eating and children were encouraged to be self-sufficient.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff spoke with children at their level, in a calm and relaxed tone. Children were at ease with staff and were comfortable in expressing their feelings and emotions to the staff members.
- Children engaged in parallel play and were observed to check in on their friends and include them in play.
- Staff were asking children if they wanted to participate in cleaning up, children were observed to freely get the dustpan and brush and support staff with clean up after free play.
- During mealtimes staff sat at the table and engaged in social conversations with the children.

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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 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.*

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

- The care rooms in use on day of inspection were clean, organised and free of clutter to facilitate the children on that day. The care rooms had an open shelving unit where children accessed toys such as kitchen utensils, dolls, puzzles and animals. There was also distinctive play areas identified around the room including a play kitchen unit, a construction table and creative area.
- The outdoor areas were accessible by the main entrance, Baby Bunnies room and Caterpillars room, with access to bikes, scooters, tuff trays, sensory activities including a water-play area. There were obstacle course materials available in the outdoor area. It was secured by a wall and a gate.
- There was an adequate number of toys available to the number of children attending the service on the day.
- Additional resources were available in the storage room.

(b)

- The sleep room facilities were adequate and suitable for the needs of the children who required sleep.
- Each care room had a rest area available to children which consisted of a couch, cushions and books, which were accessible for children to use when relaxing.
- Each cot was fitted with waterproof mattress covers and cellular blankets were available for the children.

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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

The service ensured there was adequate equipment available for the number of children attending the service. The service had additional toys and materials on the premises. It was observed on day of inspection that the service provided a number of sensory activities including water play, sand play and modelling dough.

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 snacks and meals were provided by parents/guardians of children attending the service. Perishable foods were stored in refrigerators around the service. Snacks and meals were served at appropriate times throughout the day.
- At the time of inspection, the mid-morning snack in the care rooms consisted of a selection of fruit, sandwiches and crackers. The hot meals observed included chicken curry and rice, pasta and meat, mashed potato and vegetables.
- During discussion, a staff member confirmed that if a child were to express hunger outside of routine mealtimes, they would be accommodated to have a snack from their lunch box.
- Additional snacks were available onsite if the child required it.

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 internal and external doors of the service were secured and prevented children from exiting the premises and unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- Toys and equipment appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- The openable windows were out of reach of children.

Infection control:

- Windows were open which allowed for fresh air circulation.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the refrigerators.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities.

Administration of medication:

- No administration of medication was observed on the day of inspection. Discussion with staff ensured staff were aware of the correct process for administering medication in the event it was required.

Safe sleep:

- Staff in the Baby Bunnies room were observed conducting 10-minute sleep checks throughout the day. These checks included position of the child, breathing pattern of the child and colour of the child. Staff members in the baby room maintained sleep records on a digital application.
- Staff maintained constant supervision of children over 2 years sleeping on stackable beds and floor beds in the Buzzy Bees room.
- The air temperature of the Baby Bunnies sleep room fell within the required range of 18°C to 22°C; a temperature reading of 22°C was noted.
- The Buzzy Bees sleep room temperature was recorded at 21.9°C.

Fire safety:

- Fire equipment was available which included fire extinguishers.
- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and clearly identified.

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Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. The water temperature taken in the Buzzy Bees nappy changing room sink was measured between 72.2°C and 76.2°C. No children were observed using this sink after nappy changing. The children had access to a sink in the care room where hand washing was completed. Staff were aware the water temperatures exceeded 43°C. Staff had put measures in place to ensure children did not use this sink. This was discussed with the person in charge who rectified the issue on the day of inspection. Not ensuring regular checks of the water temperatures posed a risk of scalding to the child.

Infection control:

2. It was observed that one-foot operated bin was broken in the children's sanitary facility. Children were observed washing their hands and touching the bin after to dispose of tissues. This posed a risk of cross infection to the child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The water temperatures were corrected, and the thermostat was adjusted to not exceed 43°C. The person in charge stated that staff are to conduct regular temperature checks daily and record these checks. Any issues are to be brought to the person in charge or deputy person in charge attention promptly.

Infection control:

2. The pedal bin was replaced with a new bin. Staff are to conduct regular checks of equipment and make management aware of any issues going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Photographic evidence was received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Infection control:

2. Photographic evidence was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance's identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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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) The registered provider ensured that staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) were at all times immediately available to the children. This was evident through the staff rota and staff sign in records.

(2) The first aid box was assessed on day of inspection and was fully stocked.

(a) The first aid box was stored up high, out of reach of children and easily accessible to staff.

(b) The first aid box was accessible to staff in the event that a child may require it.