

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW012				
Name of Service:	Cherish Childcare				
Address of Service:	Friars Green, Tullow Road, Carlow, Co. Carlow				
Eircode:	R93 AN26				
Name of Registered Provider:	Melanie Watson				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	14/05/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>42</td> <td>PM</td> <td>29</td> </tr> </table>	AM	42	PM	29
AM	42	PM	29		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.				
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton				
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

Cherish Childcare service is a registered full day service which operates from a purpose-built childcare premises in the residential estate of Friars Green in Carlow town. The service provides a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service as well as part-time and full day childcare services, for children aged 0 to 6 years. A registered school age service is also provided.

Staffing

There were 15 staff members employed in the service including 12 early years educators, a school aged staff member, a classroom assistant, and a chef. Two students under 18 years of age, on exchange from a German early years education college were also present in the service. The registered provider does not work in the service. All staff who as part of their role in the service worked directly with the preschool children held qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 15- Record of a Pre-School Child,

Regulation 17- Information for Parents,

Regulation 19- Health, Welfare and Development of Child,

Regulation 23- Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 24- Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance,

As a result, the scope of the inspection included all four classrooms and the outdoor play areas.

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 childcare manager, 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.*

(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 has a named designated person in charge, and a named person who can deputise as required.

(b) At all times during the inspection the designated person in charge was onsite with the deputy designated person in charge also present.

(2) Staff files for the registered provider, 15 staff members and 2 students were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each staff member, from either a past employer or from a reputable source. References were available for each of the two students present on placement.

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file for each of the 15 staff members and for the registered provider. However, the registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23.

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- (d) Police vetting disclosure certificates were on file for 4 staff members employed in the service, who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months. Police vetting disclosure certificates were available for the 2 students under 18 years on a college exchange placement.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in each of the four preschool classrooms in operation during the inspection.

Wobbler Room – There was one staff member directly caring for 3 children aged 1 to 2 years of age throughout the day of inspection.

Toddler Room- During the morning of the inspection there were 2 staff members and 1 student directly caring for 12 children aged 2 to 3 years. Throughout the afternoon and evening 9 children aged 2 to 3 years were directly cared for by 2 staff members and 1 student.

Playschool Room – Throughout the morning of the inspection 12 children aged 3 to 4 years attended the ECCE session in the playschool classroom and were directly cared for by 2 staff members and 1 student.

Senior Pre-School Room – Throughout the ECCE session 15 children aged 4 to 5 years attended the senior preschool classroom directly cared for by 3 staff members.

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In the afternoon and evening a combination of 17 children aged 3 to 5 years remained for the full day care service in the playschool classroom directly cared for by 3 staff members.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of pre-school children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each child.

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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 staff in the service demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that all parents/ guardians of a child proposed to attend or attending the service were provided with clear information in relation to the staff employed in the service, their individual roles, the type of service and age-groups provided for in the service, the ratios of staff to children applied to each classroom, the facilities available such as the designated sleep rooms for under two year olds and outdoor play facilities, opening hours, fees and accessibility to the service's policies and procedures.

All the above information was evidenced in the service's parents' handbook, which included policies in relation to working in partnership with parents and the policies that were implemented daily, in the care and safeguarding of the children attending the service.

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

(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

(1)(a)(b) Throughout the inspection the inspector observed that care practices and activities provided and available to the children were appropriate to each child's and class group's age and development.

The inspector observed that each classroom's physical environment had been created and designed to support the learning of the age group in the classroom. Staff were cognisant of children's need to have clear floor space for example in the wobbler room with children confidently crawling, pulling to stand and furniture walking with the aid of the secured furniture and ballet barre. Children in the toddler room confidently accessed suitable play

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materials and resources from the open shelving provided, working and playing with them on the appropriate height tables provided.

In the playschool and senior preschool classroom, the inspector observed how staff had ensured the diversity of the children attending the service was acknowledged and supported. Evidence of acknowledgement of the different countries of origin of children's families were displayed by flags on the walls.

A well-resourced library of appropriate reading materials provided learning opportunities for children around the topic of diversity, about being unique in oneself, getting to know who you are and acknowledging how amazing different human beings are. Children had access to age-appropriate informative books about different cultures, festivals and traditions. Reading materials informed how boys and girls are different but can do the same things or wear the same things. One child confidently told the inspector that they liked having long hair and their friends liked their hair.

Throughout the day in the service the staff in each classroom were observed to provide seamless transitions from one activity to another by ensuring children were familiar and informed of the daily schedule, by involving the children in decisions about spontaneously redirecting into emergent activities such as going outside to the service's garden area or supporting children who wanted to flick through magazines and cut pictures out forming collages of their favourite objects. The staff were observed to work very effectively in tandem, ensuring that while some supported children in activities and supervision of activities, another staff member cleared and prepared completed activities, setting up different activities to stimulate interest and play based learning opportunities.

All four classes had long opportunities to play outside with three different outdoor play spaces provided for the wobbler, toddler and senior classrooms.

Children had freedom to run and play with racket and ball activities, swings and slides and messy play in the outdoor areas, supported and engaged with staff who maintained a clear overview of all activities.

The children enthusiastically showed off their garden at the side of the premises where they had grown abundant colourful plants and herbs and were observed busily digging, transferring and wheelbarrowing earth from one point to another.

Children were observed to enjoy their snacks and meals in between the activities and after busy work periods were eager to wash their hands and prepare for their meals with their friends and the staff, talking together and ensuring that everyone was comfortably seated ready for their food.

Children took turns to hand out cutlery and plates and drinking bottles or cups. Food was served in large serving bowls in each classroom, with children observed to be familiar with this practice passing the bowl from one to another and serving themselves a portion of mixed vegetables, meat and potatoes. Individual children's food

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preferences were provided for whether a child bought a lunch from home or an alternative was offered if a child dislike what was on the menu. At the main meal, children had the option of serving themselves an accompanying sauce and some children who asked the staff politely for some grated cheese, which they had thought would be nice on top of their savoury mincemeat were responded to promptly with a bowl of grated cheese provided from the kitchen.

Throughout the daily activities, staff and children were observed to have very positive engaging interactions, with lots of familiar laughter and hugs. Staff were observed to be very prompt and effective in responding to children's different emotions encouraging children to use their words to express their needs or hurt feelings and explaining to children how certain actions can hurt their friends.

Children reciprocated with positive interactions and resolved conflicts very smoothly often times with the positive behaviours, soft gentle tones demonstrated by the staff mirrored by the children.

During the drop off and collection of the children attending the service, the inspector observed that key workers were keen to receive updates from parents on the individual children in their care and to ensure that parents or guardians at collection time were provided with an accurate summary of how their child/ children's day had unfolded during their time in the service.

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 service was secured with a surrounding metal fence and high block wall at the back of the outdoor play area located to in the back yard of the premises. The main entrance door was secured with a call bell system, with staff having a clear view of all visitors to the service and access to the service could only be authorised and facilitated by a staff member.

The inspector observed that the service had a designated safe secure storage area for cleaning materials and equipment which ensured that these items could not be accessed by the children in the service.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed that both staff and children routinely practised handwashing at various times throughout the day in line with the service's handwashing policy. Children were confident in telling the inspector that they

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washed their hands after using the toilet, messy and outdoor play and before their meals in the service. Staff were observed to frequently wash their hands throughout the inspection, in between supporting children with cares such as nose blowing, toileting, before and after nappy changing procedures and prior to meal and snack times.

Administration of Medication:

On review of children's individual medical records, administration of medication records and child centred plans for children with additional medical needs requiring prescribed medication, the inspector was assured that the management and staff in the service were well informed in this area and implemented administration of medications in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Safe Sleep:

The children in the wobbler room and some children in the toddler room used the standard cots provided in the two sleep rooms to sleep during their time in the service. Three standard cots were provided in each of the two designated sleep rooms, which were adequately dimmed and maintained within the recommended temperature range of 18 to 22°C for the children all of whom were over one year of age.

The staff were observed to record physical checks of each sleeping child's position, colour and breathing every ten minutes.

Older children in the other three classrooms had their sleep needs responded to throughout the day with the toddler room adjusted into an appropriate quiet sleeping area in the early afternoon, and the playschool room providing a quiet sleep area in the late afternoon. Children who did not wish to sleep were accommodated in the rooms not used for a sleep session at the time. Appropriate stackable beds for children two-year-old and over, with fitted sheets and cellular blankets were provided.

The inspector observed how staff in all four classrooms worked together to effectively manage the sleep needs of children who wished to sleep at a time that they wanted to, while also ensuring that adult to child ratios were maintained.

Outing:

The staff and management informed the inspector that they did not regularly take large groups of children on outings away from the service, however an adequate outings policy was in place for implementation if such an occasion were to arise.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The Garda vetting disclosure for the registered provider was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'. It is

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acknowledged that the registered provider has initiated the process of renewal of Garda Vetting with the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Garda Vetting Department and provided evidence of same to the inspector.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider submitted the following response- The registered provider immediately initiated the process of renewal of their Garda Vetting with the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Garda Vetting Department. Responsibility for monitoring Garda Vetting renewal dates has been clearly assigned to the general manager, with regular oversight from the registered provider to ensure compliance is maintained. Compliance documentation will be reviewed as part of routine management meetings to ensure all statutory requirements remain current.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Attached evidence of the Garda vetting application, including the tracking information and subsequent Garda Vetting Certificate.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - (iii) an employee, or*
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

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(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's daily attendance and departure times to and from the service were recorded daily. On review of the attendance records in each of the four classrooms, the number of children present correlated with the attendance records maintained by the staff in each classroom.

(3)(a) The inspector observed that no person other than a child attending the service, a parent/ guardian dropping or collecting a child, an employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without authorisation by the registered provider or an employee.

(b) The inspector observed that a daily record of any visitors to the service was maintained and detailed the name, contact details, purpose of visit and times of entry and exit from the service. The inspector was required to record the details in the record book available in the entrance hall, upon arriving at the service.

(4) The inspector observed that a visitor record had been maintained for greater than one year prior to the date of inspection.

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 three staff members employed in the service with current first aid responder (FAR) training.

At all times while the service was operating, there was at least two staff members with FAR training present. This was reflected in the staff roster reviewed by the inspector on the day of inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a first aid cupboard located in an elevated position on the wall of the main corridor, which was easily accessed by all staff and was always available for use.

The first aid contents were adequate, and records demonstrated that the first aid contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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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 fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*
- (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) The following fire safety records were maintained:
- (a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 20 March 2026 @ 15:50 hours.
 - (b) A written record was maintained of the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and the smoke alarm system in the service. The last maintenance check of fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in May 2026 and for the fire alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 27 April 2026.
- (2) The fire safety records were available and open for inspection by the early years inspector or by a parent / employee on request.
- (3) The designated person in charge demonstrated that records were maintained for the five years prior to inspection.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the main entrance hall.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a full day childcare service for up to 60 early years children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2026 to the 27 March 2027.