

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC312
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Name of Service:	Respond Early Years Service, Oakfield Close
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Address of Service:	Oakfield Close, Summerhill, Mallow, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P51 AP63
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lisa O'Rourke
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	7
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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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Respond Early Years Service - Oakfield Close, is a community-based children's centre offering both part-time and sessional services. It is registered to accommodate children from 2 to 6 years of age. Opening times are from 9.00am until 1.00pm with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme facilitated between the hours of 9.00am until 12.00pm, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. A school age service is available from 1.30pm until 6.30pm.

Respond Early Years Service - Oakfield Close, is a dormer style building located in a residential estate on the outskirts of Mallow town in north Cork. The service consists of a reception area on the ground floor off which there are adult and children's sanitary facilities including a nappy changing cubicle. There are two entry doors to the main care room with two children's toilets adjacent to the room, a separate kitchen and a separate room known as the Quiet room. The upstairs, which is accessed from the reception area, has a school age care room and an office. The outdoor play area is located to the rear of the service and is accessible from the main care room. Car parking is available at the front of the service. This service is part of a multiple service provider.

Staffing

There were 15 adults attached to the service. This included the registered provider and area manager who are not service based, the person in charge, deputy person in charge, three early years practitioners, two Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) workers, three School Age Care workers, one cleaner, one office administrator and one student completing placement.

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

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- Discussion with relevant staff

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.

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.

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(b) From review of the roster 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, early years educators, school age staff and AIM workers.

(2) Fifteen adults were attached to the service; all 14 staff files and 1 student file were open to inspection.

(a) Of the 30 references required, 23 validated references were from past employers.

(b) Of the 30 references required, 7 validated references was from an alternative source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults. However, the service 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 of the report.

(d) Police vetting was deemed to be required for 3 of the 15 adults working in the service and copies of the relevant documents were maintained on file for the 3 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 11 adults working directly with the children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education 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.

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(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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

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

- In the Preschool room in the morning, there were 4 staff working with 15 children aged between 2 years and 6 months and 4 years and 9 months. Eight of these children were attending sessional care and seven children were attending part-time care. In the afternoon, there were four staff working with seven children aged between 3 years and 4 years and 9 months.

(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.

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:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1) (i) A review of the staff roster included staff start/finish times, break cover and any changes due to illness or staff holidays.

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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

Basic needs:

- Children had access to a jug of water and cups at all times.
- Children were encouraged in developing their independence skills such as putting on their own coat and zipping it up. Staff were available to support children if required.
- The service provided breakfast and snacks. Meals were served at adequate times throughout the day and mealtimes were observed not to be rushed.
- The children were observed independently accessing the sanitary areas. The staff were available to provide assistance, if required. Children's clothes were changed when wet and dried in the service.

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.
- During mealtimes staff sat at the table and engaged in social conversations with the children.
- Partnership with the parents was a predominant focus in the service. Staff engaged with parents at collection and drop off.

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

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Compliance Information

(1) (a)

- The care room in use on day of inspection was clean, organised and free of clutter to facilitate the children on that day. The care room 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 area was accessible by the main 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. The person in charge stated that upgrades were being conducted to the outdoor area and new equipment had been purchased.
- 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.

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 assessed appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- Blind cords were securely out of reach of children.
- 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.
- Appropriate water temperatures were recorded in the sanitary facility between 39.0°C to 41.4°C.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities.

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- Foot operated bins were available in each room and sanitary facility.
- Children were observed washing their hands after activities, before mealtimes and after toileting.

Administration of medication:

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

Fire safety:

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

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The children's stairgate at the bottom of the stairs was broken on the day of inspection. This posed a risk to the safety of the children and adults using the stairs.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The registered provider applied for Tusla Garda Vetting following the inspection. The disclosure once received will be forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. The registered provider put a new stairgate in place at the bottom of the stairs. The stairgate will be reviewed as part of the monthly health and safety checks to be conducted by staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Evidence of the Tusla Garda Vetting application was sent to the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. Photographic evidence of the new stairgate was received by 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 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.*
- (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 service had maintained a record on the following:
- (a) Each fire drill that had taken place in the service. The last recorded fire drill was 25 March 2026.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance checks of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm. The records on file demonstrated the last check on the fire extinguishers was 11 March 2025 and the smoke alarm was 04 December 2025. On discussion with the person in charge, an appointment had been organised prior to the day of inspection for the fire equipment to be serviced on 31 March 2026. The person in charge updated the Early Years Inspectorate with the newest firefighting equipment and fire and smoke alarm service records.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was displayed in the service.