

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015DR089

Name of Service: Willow House Childcare Newtownpark

Address of Service: Shaldon, Newtown Park Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

Eircode: A94 WY28

Name of Registered Provider: Yvonne Tierney

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 25/07/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	27
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: The Brunel Building,
Heuston South Quarter,
St. John's Road West,
Dublin 8.

Inspection undertaken by: R. Duff

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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Willow House Childcare Newtownpark is a privately owned service located in a residential area of Blackrock, South County Dublin. The service provides full day, part-time and sessional care to children aged 1-6 years and offers an Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme and operates from 07:30 to 18:00 each weekday. The service operates from a two storey purposely adapted residential property. Care is provided across three rooms on the ground floor and a designated sleep room is available. A large outdoor play area is located to the rear of the property with artificial grass and natural bark surfacing. The outdoor area is split into three areas to allow all children access the garden throughout the day. The first floor of the premises is utilised as an office space.

Staffing

The service currently employs 10 staff members, not including the registered provider who does not work directly in the service. On the day of inspection 9 staff members were present, including 2 adults providing relief cover who stated they are based in another service operated by the registered provider. A senior manager and a general manager were present on the day of inspection but did not work directly with the children.

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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child, information and records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(3)(4) Management and recruitment.

Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing levels.

Regulation 19 (1)(b) Health, welfare and development of child.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of child.

Regulation 25 First Aid

Regulation 28 Insurance

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

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the 25 July 2025 during the inspection in respect of Regulation 9 (2)(c), Garda Vetting. A response was received from the service on the 28 July 2025 which sufficiently mitigated the risk identified.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the general manager, senior manager, 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 named person to deputise as needed.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived to the service.
- (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own role and responsibilities.

(2)

The inspection included a review of 9 staff files for adults who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 29 September 2023 and included a review of Garda vetting disclosures for all staff.

Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b) Of the 18 written and validated references that were required, 14 were available from a past employer and 2 were available from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for 9 adults employed to work directly with the children and 2 additional adults who do not work directly with the children. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International Police vetting was available for 6 adults who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for six months or more as an adult.

(4)
Records were available evidencing that 8 adults who were employed since the last inspection to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)
(a) (b) Two written references were available for one adult however there was no evidence to show that they had been verified. Written references should be verified to ensure the potential employee is suitable and competent.
(c) A Garda Vetting disclosure was not available for one adult working in the service. Through discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed the staff member had commenced employment on the 7 July 2025. An immediate action notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on the 25 July 2025.
(d) International police vetting was not available for one adult who resided outside of the country for more than six consecutive months.

(3)
A review of documentation evidenced the registered provider had not taken the required steps as outlined in Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) to ensure that new recruits were suitable and competent before allowing them access to children, as detailed above.

(4)
Evidence of a childcare qualification was not provided for one adult who worked directly with the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a) (b) The registered provider verified the outstanding references and will ensure all references received are verified in the future prior to an employee commencing employment.
- (c) Garda Vetting has been obtained for one adult who was working in the service. The registered provider stated that the person has resumed employment now that vetting is in place.
- (d) Police vetting is now in place for one adult who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as an adult. The registered provider will ensure translated police vetting is available in the future prior to an employee commencing employment.

(4)

The registered provider stated that one adult who required a childcare qualification to work with children has completed the requirement for qualification.

The registered provider has stated that the recruitment policy has been updated to ensure all documents are in place prior to an employee commencing employment in the service. A checklist has been developed for regular audits on all staff files.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children for full time services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 27 children attending the service being supervised by 9 adults on the day of inspection.

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-*
- (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

A busy and welcoming atmosphere was evident on arrival at the service and throughout the inspection. Children were engaged in a range of activities and had the opportunity to move freely to a new activity. Staff demonstrated warmth and affection in their interactions with the children. They addressed children by name, used gentle tones and interacted with them in a positive manner. Language used by the staff members was observed to be encouraging, supportive and informative.

Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to a new activity and to alert them of snack time. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment. All food is provided by the service. Meals times were social occasions with children and adults sitting together having the opportunity to chat about the morning, staff provided children with help when needed. Drinks were readily available within the care rooms. Children were encouraged to clean up after themselves and assisted to clean their faces and hands at appropriate times. Older children used the toilet independently and children wearing nappies had these changed regularly

Child sized tables and chairs allowed the children to eat and engage in tabletop activities. There was evidence that equipment and materials provided were based on the children's individual needs and emergent interests. The

toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving units and accessible to children. The care rooms also had cushions and floor mats to facilitate rest or provide a place for children to take a break from activities. The outdoor areas were equipped with a range of toys and materials to support play experiences. Engagement with families and parents is facilitated by the daily sharing of information on the child's day. This is shared through conversations at drop off and collection and supported by electronic means. On the day of inspection transitions from preschool to home were observed to be friendly and informative to parents or guardians collecting children.

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:

- When the inspector arrived at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorized persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. In addition, the outdoor play area was securely gated restricting unauthorized persons from gaining access to this area and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- Toys and equipment were maintained in good condition free from hazards.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- Medication was stored in a locked press or out of reach of children

Infection Control:

- Soothers were kept in individual labelled containers to avoid cross contamination.
- Each child was provided with their own bed linen, which was laundered weekly.
- Both the indoor and outdoor environment were maintained in a clean condition.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, liquid soap, and pedal operated bins.
- The children and staff members washed their hands at appropriate intervals throughout the inspection.

Administration of Medication:

- A sample of 10 medication records were reviewed. The forms were completed correctly. This included ensuring written consent was obtained from parents or guardians, having a second staff member present as a witness during administration, and maintaining detailed records shared with parents or guardians upon collection.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep logs were maintained in the care rooms where children slept, and individual children's observations recorded room temperature, breathing, colour, and position every ten minutes. The required temperature range of 18 - 22°Celsius was maintained while children slept.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

Outing:

- The person in charge advised the inspector that the children are not taken on outings from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Little stars room, a press containing cleaning products was left unlocked, the press was accessible to children. This poses a potential risk of danger to children if they accessed it.
2. In the sanitary area used by the toddler room, a door to an adjoining storage area containing cleaning products was left unlocked. The storage area was accessible to children. This poses a potential risk of danger to children if they accessed it. The person in charge locked the door to the storage area following a discussion with the inspector.

Infection Control:

3. In the little steps room, the pedal on the foot operated bin was inaccessible to staff and children, as a result staff were using their hands to open the bin, this poses a potential risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that staff have been reminded of the importance of keeping cleaning product in a locked press away from children. A sign has been placed on the front of the press as a visual reminder to keep the press locked.
2. The registered provider stated that the storage area was immediately locked following the inspection, a staff meeting was held to remind staff of the importance of keeping cleaning products out of reach of children. Staff have been asked to check the door regularly and a sign has been placed on the front of the door as a visual reminder to keep the door locked at all times.

Infection Control:

- The registered provider stated that the bin was repositioned following the inspection and staff were reminded to ensure the bin is in the correct position to allow the pedal be used effectively. Staff were also reminded to address any issues with equipment in the rooms with the manager.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Infection Control:

Supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next 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) A person trained in first aid for children was, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and were safely stored in easily accessible and conspicuous positions in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the full day service was insured. The insurance certificate provided for review showed cover for 41 children and an expiry date of 27 March 2026.