

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR143
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Name of Service:	Willow House Childcare Woodbine
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Address of Service:	3 Woodbine Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A94 HX22
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Name of Registered Provider:	Yvonne Tierney
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	26/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	27
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	H. Sutherland and O. Quill
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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 Woodbine is one of three early years services operated by the registered provider. The service is located in a residential area of Blackrock, South County Dublin. Opening hours are 7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and full day care and education is provided to children aged 1 to 6 years. The premises comprises of a single storey, purposely adapted building with four childcare rooms, a sleep room, sanitary facilities, a kitchen, and a fully enclosed outdoor area.

Staffing

There are currently eight staff members employed to work in the service, including the person in charge. On the day of inspection, there were ten staff members present including the person in charge, six childcare staff, and a staff member rostered to cover from another service operated by the registered provider. The area manager and general manager arrived after the inspection commenced and remained present for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 and records. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9(1), (2), (3), (4), (7)(a) – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11(1), (2), (8) - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 (1)(a), (b), (3) - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 20(1), (b) – Facilities for rest and play

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 27 – Supervision

Regulation 32 – Complaints

However, on inspection an additional non-compliance was identified under Regulation 8 Notification of change in circumstances. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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

The inspection was triggered as a result of information received by the inspectorate on 12 November 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the general manager, area manager, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider failed to notify the agency of a change in the person in charge. The agency must be notified of any such change at least sixty days prior to the proposed change.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has notified the Agency of a change in person in charge and a compliance monitoring system has been put in place to ensure the agency will be notified with any future change in circumstances.

Supporting documentation submitted

Record of the notification confirming the change in person in charge received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 8 has been adequately addressed and the regulatory requirement has been met.

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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and remained present for the duration of the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in the service which identified the lines of authority and accountability, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2) It was confirmed with the area manager that seven new adults commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 7 February 2024. Six of these adults were employed to work directly with the children. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2), (3), (4) was reviewed in respect of the seven adults. In addition, the file of an adult rostered to cover from another service operated by the registered provider was reviewed. The requirements of Regulation 9(2)(c), relating to Garda vetting, were reviewed for all adults employed to work in the service.

(a) Fourteen written and verified references were available from past employers.

(b) Two written and verified references were available from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 11 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 available in respect of eight adults who had lived outside the State for a period longer than six months as an adult.

(3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had been carried out prior to the adults commencing employment in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the eight adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). One adult who did not have the required qualification had a letter of eligibility to practice from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

(7)

(a) A sample of six staff training records was reviewed as part of the inspection. There was documentary evidence to show that the six adults employed to work directly with the children had read the service's policies and procedures. Including, health and safety, child protection, outdoor policies, and classroom related duties. In addition, staff reported that the service holds regular staff meetings, with the most recent meetings held on 29 September and 30 October 2025. Records available for review showed topics covered at the meetings included nappy changing, infection control, the indoor environment, curriculum and risk management.

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 pre-school children attending the service during the inspection. There were 7 adults caring for 31 children in the morning and 6 adults caring for 27 children in the afternoon. The person in charge was also available to provide support when required.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were maintained for the duration of the inspection.
- (8)(a) A review of the roster confirmed that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Inspectors observed that appropriate and suitable care practices were in place and each child's learning and development and wellbeing was facilitated as detailed below.

Staff reported that children's breakfast, a morning snack and a hot dinner were provided by the service and the parents provide an afternoon snack. Self-feeding was encouraged and staff sat with children during mealtimes, providing support for any children requiring assistance. Bibs were provided for young children and staff were observed to promote healthy hygiene practices for children. For example, children were encouraged to wash their hands after outdoor play, before and after meals, after nappy changing and using the toilet. Mealtimes were calm and unhurried and activities were provided for children who had finished eating. For example, after dinner children in the Little Giggles room sat in the rest area while a staff member read them a story, children in the Little Steps room were observed playing in the rest area with cars and blocks. Drinking water was freely available to children during the inspection and children were given water with their meals and during outdoor play.

Children’s nappies were changed at regular intervals and as needed. During this time staff were observed to sing songs and speak softly to children. The lighting was dimmed in rooms where children slept and staff were observed to provide comfort and reassurance during sleep time. Older children were provided with a comfortable space to rest if needed. All children had the opportunity to engage in outdoor play and were appropriately dressed for the weather.

The indoor environment was laid out to support children to be independent. Play materials were stored on open low-level shelving and included items such as, kitchens and props, construction materials, musical instruments, puzzles, books and small world materials. The inspectors observed children moving freely around the care rooms exploring their environment and accessing items of interest with ease. The outdoor area was divided into two separate spaces, each used in accordance with children’s age. Play materials included, slides, ride on cars, playhouses and picnic benches. Staff were observed to play games with children during outdoor play. Play was child led and daily plans were on display on the doors of the care rooms detailing the planned activities for the day. For example, children in the Little Giggles room were learning about different types of food. This theme emerged from staff observations of children’s interest in the play food available in the home corner. Staff reported that parents have regular opportunities to talk about their child with staff at both drop off and collection.

(3) On the day of inspection, inspectors did not observe any care practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful to the children in attendance.

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-*

(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

Suitable facilities were provided for children to rest during the day as detailed below.

Areas with rugs and cushions were available in the care rooms to allow children to take a break from activities if required. Seven standard cots and an adequate number of low-level beds were available for use. Appropriate bed linen was available for each child requiring sleep. The rooms where children slept were observed to be conducive to sleep.

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

There was adequate and suitable furniture and play equipment available on the premises as follows:

- The toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving and visible to the children.
- There was an adequate amount of play materials and equipment available to the children, all of which were appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- There was an adequate number of tables and chairs to accommodate children during play and mealtimes.
- Age-appropriate cups, crockery and cutlery was provided for the children at mealtimes.

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 registered provider ensured that nutritious and varied food and drink were made available for children attending the service. A healthy eating policy outlined how healthy habits are promoted and provided information on frequency of mealtimes in the service, as detailed below.

- Snacks and dinner were prepared in the kitchen onsite.
- Breakfast which consists of wheat and oat cereals is provided to children from 7.30am to 9am.
- A snack consisting of rice cakes, yogurt and fruit was provided to children at 10.00am. Extra portions of snack were available for children requesting more.
- Sausage hot pot was provided at 11.40am, consisting of mixed beans, sausages and potatoes.
- Parents provided the afternoon snack, which is served at 3pm. Parents of children staying after 5pm are asked to provide an additional snack for their child.
- Drinking water was readily available to children throughout the inspection and was offered at regular intervals.

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 entrance door to the service was secured to prevent unauthorised access or children exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored safely and out of reach of the children.
- Toys and play equipment observed in use by children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.
- A shock absorbent surface was placed where slides and playhouses were located in the outdoor area.

Infection Control:

- The care rooms were clean and well maintained.
- The service promoted good handwashing practices through the provision of liquid soap, warm water and single use paper towels.
- Staff were aware of the exclusion periods for children presenting with high temperatures in line with the services infection control policy.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated awareness of the procedure to safely administer medication to a child if required.
- Documented administration of medication records were made available for review.

Safe Sleep:

- Children under the age of two were provided with a cot for sleeping.
- Sleep logs were maintained, and individual observations recorded the room temperature, breathing pattern, colour, and position of the child. An ambient temperature of 18-22°C was maintained for sleeping children over one years old in the Little Steps room and the Little Giggles room.
- Sleep checks were carried out at regular intervals.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire exits were unobstructed for the duration of the inspection.

- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to evacuate children safely from the service in the event of a fire and explained that drills were practiced regularly, with the most recent drill carried out on 31 October 2025.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. During observation of a series of nappy changes the inspector noted that staff carrying out nappy changing did not follow the required hygiene procedures. After completing the nappy changes two staff members failed to wash their hands as outlined in the services nappy changing policy. Poor hand hygiene practice increases the risk of the spread of infection.
2. Air vents in two of the sanitary areas were not adequately cleaned. Air vents in the Little Star junior toilet and Little Giggles nappy changing room were observed to have a visible accumulation of dust. Inadequate cleaning of air vents can lead to poor air circulation and the spread of infection.
3. A vinyl step in the Little Steps room was observed to be torn exposing the inner foam. The exposed tear posed an infection control risk, as the surface cannot be effectively cleaned or sanitised.
4. A laminate surface on a table in the Little Steps room was observed to be worn, with areas of exposed wood visible. The exposed wood compromises the ability to effectively clean and sanitise the surface.
5. A bin in use in the Little Steps room was not pedal operated. It was observed that a bin in the Little Steps room was push button requiring hand contact to dispose of waste. Hand operated bins increase the risk of cross contamination and the spread of infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. The nappy changing procedure was reviewed and staff were reminded of the importance of hand hygiene to reduce the risk of spreading infection. The service will reinforce infection control and hand hygiene procedures through ongoing staff training and supervision.
2. The air vents were cleaned immediately, and the service has reviewed and updated its cleaning schedules to ensure that the air vents in all sanitary areas are cleaned regularly. Management will carry out regular checks to ensure cleaning tasks are completed in line with the services infection control procedures.
3. The vinyl step was removed and a new step was sourced. The service will ensure that all play equipment and furnishings are regularly checked for wear and tear.

4. The exposed wood has been covered to ensure the table can be effectively cleaned. The service will carry out regular checks on furniture and repair or replace any items requiring attention.
5. The bin was removed and replaced with a pedal operated bin. The service will ensure that all waste bins are pedal operated. Regular environmental checks will be carried out by management to ensure that appropriate equipment is in place to support infection control procedures.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. Record of the hand washing procedure.
2. Photographic images of both air vents.
3. No evidence received.
4. Photographic image of the repaired table.
5. Photographic image of the pedal bin.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed and the regulatory requirement has been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The required adult to child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection, ensuring each child remained under the supervision of a staff member. Staff adequately supervised children during mealtimes, play, nappy changing and toileting. During mealtimes and play, staff positioned themselves strategically allowing them to supervise children by both sight and sound.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-*
- (a) *the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) *the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) *the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) *a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
 - (b) *the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The service had a complaints policy which outlined the following:
- (a) The procedure to be followed when making a complaint to the service.
 - (b) The manner in which a complaint would be dealt with.
 - (c) The procedures for informing the complainant of the progress and outcome of the complaint.
- (2)
- (a) A written record of the most recent complaint made on the 10 October 2025 was maintained within the service and made available for review by the inspectors.
 - (b) Evidence reviewed demonstrated that the complaint was duly dealt with in accordance with the services complaints policy.