

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015GY210
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Acorn to Oak Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	St. Brigid's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway
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<b>Eircode:</b>	H53 XY19
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Rebecca Blight
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	25/02/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	72	PM	51
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Child and Family Agency. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor St Mary's HQ, Castlebar, Co Mayo. F23HP58
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	B Lavin & F Nic Dhonnacha
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

This community operated pre-school is in a purpose-built premises in the town of Portumna, Co Galway. This service offers a full day care and part time care provision from 07.00 to 18.00. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme and a sessional care programme are also offered. The service is registered for pre-school children aged 0 to 6 years of age. The service is also registered to cater for school age children.

### Staffing

The registered provider is supernumerary and not on the premises daily. There was a named person in charge and a named designated deputy person in charge. There are a total of 20 staff working in the service including the registered provider and a cook.

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

On inspection a non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and Regulation 29 Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms name rooms Baby room, Senior Montessori 2, Wobbler room, Junior Montessori 1 and Junior Montessori 1, Toddlers and Senior Montessori 1.

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

On the 25/02/2026 a Safety Immediate Action Notice was issued onsite regarding Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child.

The water temperature in three wash hand basins used by the preschool children on the 25/02/2026 was recorded in excess of the recommended temperature of 43°C. This posed a significant risk of burns or scald of the preschool children.

On the 26/02/2026 an adequate response was received in the office of the early years inspectorate to address the Immediate Action Notice.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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.

(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 manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) During the period of inspection, the person in charge was on the premises and facilitated the inspection.

Following a review of the service files and discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that there were no new members of staff employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 25/09/2025.

(c) There were three garda vetting disclosures updated since the last inspection, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting for staff members every

three years.

(d) Police vetting disclosure was available for five adults working in the service as they had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over six months.

(4) The 18 adults working directly with children that had obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or equivalent on the National Qualifications 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.*

*(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 were 17 adults working directly with children on the day of inspection. The manager in the service provided relief cover and assistance with the administration part of the inspection.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

- Baby room: 1 adult cared for 4 children aged between 1 to 2 years of age.
- Wobbler room: 2 adults cared for 9 children aged between 1 to 2 and a half years of age.
- Toddler room: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged between 2 to 3 and a half years of age.
- Junior Montessori room 1: 2 adults cared for 13 children aged between 3 to 4 years of age.
- Junior Montessori room 2: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged between 3 to 4 years of age.
- Senior Montessori room 1: 3 adults cared for 16 children aged between 4 to 5 years of age.
- Senior Montessori room 2: 1 adult cared for 7 children aged 4 to 5 years of age.

Two staff members and the service manager acted as floating staff members and provided relief cover for breaks and nappy changes.

(8) There were two adults present in the service during the operation hours of 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

#### Compliance Information

##### Basic Needs

##### (1)(a)

- Drinking water was available on low tables in each playroom to all children throughout the day.
- Nutritious healthy meals were served at regular times with flexibility given for children who were sleeping.
- Care and attention were taken during mealtimes to eat at the child's pace and staff encouraged and supported children to feed themselves independently according to their age and stage of development.
- Children sat at tables and chairs which were appropriate for their height and/or stage of development.
- The staff were observed sitting at the child's level and chatted in a respectful manner during meal and snack times.
- The privacy and dignity of each child was respected during toileting practices.
- Staff responded to each child's individual needs and children's nappies were changed in a timely manner.
- Appropriate rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in these areas for short periods of rest throughout the day.
- The children's nap and sleep times were tailored to each child's individual needs.
- The children had easy access to the outside areas throughout the day. Children moved freely between indoors and outdoors.

##### Supporting relationships

- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them and talking to children in a variety of ways- discussing, questioning, modelling, commentating and initiating games and activities.

- The staff behaved in a way that created a positive atmosphere, having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection.
- The staff listened to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures and body language.
- The service provided parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child, for example, verbal communication at drop of and collection times and through a bespoke childcare application.
- There was a section with photographs and a description of the child engaged in activities. Staff observations, a child’s milestones and individual learning stories were captured. The childcare application showed details of sleep provisions, meals, nappy changing/toileting, special activities, accidents and incidents, medication administration, a child’s likes, needs and preferences, general observations and comments.
- Each child had a scrapbook with themes, activities and observations collated together. They included themes such as my family, community helpers, autumn colours, safe cross code and transport, Halloween, Christmas, 2026, Valentines Day, Pancakes and many more examples. These scrapbooks were issued to parents and guardians at the end of the school year.

### 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

- There was a healthy eating policy. The person in charge advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- In the morning before 09.00, the children had access to a selection of oat and wheat-based cereals, with milk and toast.
- At 10.00, the children in Junior room 1, Junior room 2, Senior room 1 and Senior room 2 had their snacks provided by parents and guardians which included cheese, bread sticks, crackers, rice cakes, sandwiches, fruit pieces and yogurt. The Baby room, Wobbler room and Toddler room were provided with snacks from the service. This consisted of cheese, toast and fruit (bananas).

- At 12.00, the children had their main meal. On the day of inspection, the main meal was bacon, mashed potatoes, gravy and cabbage with milk or water to drink.
- At 14.30, the children had their afternoon snacks which consisted of beans and waffles and toasted cheese bagels with milk or water to drink.
- At 16.30-16.45 the children have an additional snack which consisted of fruit muffins and a variety of chopped fruit with milk or water to drink.
- There were additional snacks available within the service if the children required extra food.
- Cutlery and plates were offered for children's snack/mealtimes, appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children.
- Drinking water on low-level tables was available and accessible to children in each playroom.
- There was a designated fridge for the safe storage of perishable foodstuffs from children's lunch boxes for their snack times.

### 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:

- An electronic operated system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within the outdoor play area.
- Medication and cleaning agents were stored in a secured area out of reach of the children.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured to the windows throughout the service.
- Visibility strips and visual pictures were installed on glass doors and windows for safety precautions and to prevent injury to children and staff.

##### Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean condition.

- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, pedal operated bins. Child friendly handwashing posters were located above the wash hand basins as prompts to promote good handwashing practices.
- The children washed their hands at appropriate intervals after activities, wiping their noses, toileting and before mealtimes.
- There was three nappy changing units available with clean intact change mats and leak proof, airtight foot pedal operated bins.
- Cleaning products were inaccessible to the preschool children in care rooms.

### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered to a child by staff on the day of inspection.
- Temperature reducing medication was available. It was safely stored and in date. In conversation staff were able to detail the procedures for administering medication to children.
- Individual care plans were available for specific children who required monitoring and medical treatment if required. In conversation, the staff were able to describe the individual care plan for these children.

### Safe Sleep:

- There were 10 individual cots available for the children under the age of 2 years of age who required rest and sleep provision. Waterproof mattress covers were available for ease of cleaning.
- A temperature checking device was available in the designated sleep room to monitor the sleep room temperature while the younger children were sleeping.
- An evacuation cot was available for emergency evacuations.
- Stackable beds were available for the children aged over 2 years of age who required sleep provision.
- Regular sleep checks were carried out on the children and recorded on the electronic application system.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed throughout the service.
- Clear signage was available to highlight the exits.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued on 25/02/2026 for water temperatures which were above the recommended 43°C in wash hand basins used by the children on the day of inspection.
  - Examples included water temperatures in the Wobbler nappy changing area was recorded at 11.25 at 55.6°C at 11.40 48.6 °C and at 12.51 it was 62.4°C.

- The temperature in the wash hand basin in the Wobbler toilet/sanitary area was recorded at 11.55 which read 54.6°C and at 12.57 read 62.4°C.
- The temperatures recorded in the Toddler room Sanitary area (wash hand basin on the left-hand side) at 14.49 was 62.2°C and at 15.10 it was 62.0°C.

The registered provider submitted a risk assessment and an interim plan to manage the immediate risks to the preschool children and had contacted a competent person to regulate the water temperatures.

2. At approximately 10.45 in the Cabin Junior Montessori room 2 it was observed that a child was sitting at the table for snack time with whole grapes in their lunch box. This posed a potential risk of choking for a preschool child. The staff and person in charge were informed immediately. The grapes were removed and cut accordingly.

### Infection Control:

1. The children's green and cream seat and blue and cream seat in the Wobbler room was frayed and torn. Additionally, the green seat in the Toddler room was frayed and torn. This made it difficult to clean the surfaces efficiently posing a risk of cross infection to the preschool children.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

1. The sinks have been closed off to the children while they are awaiting fixing by a competent person. A plumber has been sourced and the required material for repairs ordered. There is a process ongoing for the hiring of a maintenance staff member who will have regular oversight of maintenance issues and rectify them.
2. A notice has been issued to all parents in relation to the need to chop grapes safely into small pieces.

### Infection Control:

1. The couches that were frayed and torn have been removed and will be replaced by new couches.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

##### General Safety:

Documentation and photographic evidence submitted to the office of the early year's inspectorate.

##### Infection Control:

Documentation evidence submitted to the office of the early year's inspectorate.

### Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on 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)  
Four staff had current First Aid Responder training (FAR) completed and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)  
(a) There was a first aid box safely stored in each care room and easily accessible to staff on the premises.  
(b) These first aid boxes were adequately stocked with the required necessary items.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

*(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*

*(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

*(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

### Non-Compliance Information

(c) 1. The ceiling light in the Wobbler sanitary area was flickering. This made visibility difficult for the children who used this sanitary area. A new replacement bulb and maintenance was required.  
2. One of four tubular ceiling lights was not working in the Junior Montessori room 1. This made shadows in the room. A new replacement bulb and maintenance was required to provide adequate lighting for the preschool children.

(d) 3. There was no entry door handle on the Wobbler toilet (sanitary area), this made it difficult to open and close the door. This needed maintenance and repair.

(e) 4. One adult toilet and 1 wash hand basin was available for 16 adults who were working on the premises. There were not enough designated adult toilets and wash hand basins onsite for the adult/staff who were working on the day of inspection. A minimum of one toilet and one wash hand basin is required for every eight adult/staff working on the premises.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. An electrician has been booked to repair the ceiling lights in the wobbler room on April 11<sup>th</sup>.
2. An electrician has been booked to repair the ceiling lights in the junior Montessori room on April 11<sup>th</sup>.
3. The maintenance staff member will repair the door handle once the recruitment process is completed.
4. Staff now have the use of an additional toilet within the service that is not needed for the children due to nappy changing needs.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation and photographic evidence submitted to the office of the inspectorate.

## Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection.