

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY210
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Name of Service:	Acorn to Oak Childcare
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Address of Service:	St. Brigid's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H53 XY19
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rebecca Blight
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate TUSLA, Child and Family Agency 2nd Floor, St Mary's HQ Castlebar Co Mayo
Inspection undertaken by:	B Lavin, F Kelly
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

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 7.00hrs to 18.00hrs. 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 25 staff working in the service including the registered provider.

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.

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 20 and 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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

An immediate action notice regarding the high temperature in the baby sleep room was issued by the Early Years Inspectorate to the registered provider on the 25 September 2025. The registered provider submitted a response on the 26 September 2025 to the Early Years Inspectorate in relation to 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.

(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 a named person to deputise if required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the service manager 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 25 members of staff employed in the service, which included the registered provider, a community employment worker, cook and a school aged staff member. These staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

- (2)(a) Of the required 50 references, there were 37 written and appropriately validated references available from their most recent employer for the adults working in the service.
- (b) Of the required 50 references, there were 13 written and appropriately validated references available from a source other than the staff members most recent employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 24 staff working in the service. The service demonstrated

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 5 adults working in the service as they had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over 6 months.

(4) The 21 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 18 adults working directly with children on the day of inspection. In addition, the manager in the service provided relief cover.

(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: 2 adults cared for 5 children aged between 8 and 11 months old.
- Wobbler room: 3 adults cared for 8 children aged between 1 and 2 years of age.
- Toddler room: 3 adults cared for 10 children aged between 2 and 3 years of age.
- Junior Montessori room 1: 2 adults cared for 10 children aged between 2 and 3 years of age.
- Junior Montessori room 2: 3 adults cared for 13 children aged between 2 and 3 years of age.
- Senior Montessori room 1: 4 adults cared for 16 children aged between 3 and 4 years of age.
- Senior Montessori room 2: 1 adult cared for 7 children aged between 3 and 4 years of age.

Two staff members acted as floating staff members and provided relief cover for breaks and nappy changes.
(8) There were 2 adults present in the service at all times during the 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-

- (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
- (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

- Nappy changing on the was carried out regularly and promptly when required and handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Staff members were observed speaking to children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction.
- Bibs and aprons were available to children for messy play activities.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met. This was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals. Older preschool children were facilitated with a scheduled rest period in the afternoon. For children who did not require a sleep, appropriate rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day.
- The baby room was laid out to stimulate the interest of the younger child. Soft padded flooring allowed for the young children to crawl and explore and learn to walk. Climbing frames and bars allowed the young children to pull themselves to a standing position and become stable on their feet developing gross motor skills. Building blocks and ball ponds allowed for fine motor skill development. A rest area with library stocked with musical and age-appropriate books allowed for language development as the staff members were observed singing to the children as stories were read. The children were observed to move around the area freely directing their own sense of play. The staff members in the baby room were observed to be kind and warm in their interactions with the young children offering hugs and affection.
- Children in the older care rooms had easy access to the outside area throughout the day and children moved freely between both indoors and outdoors. The children were observed engaging in a variety of activities that encouraged both gross motor development and fine motor skill development. Children had the opportunity to run, climb, ride bikes and play imaginative games with the playhouses and tree houses.

- All children in the service experienced outdoor time during the day. The children in the baby room went on a nature walk to see the ducks and the marina in a custom-made buggy to accommodate 6 children. Each playroom had their own designated outdoor play area with direct access leading from their care room.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions.
- Individual inclusion plans were implemented in line with children's own needs. The plans detailed the current developmental stage of the child, the interventions needed by the staff to always ensure the child's learning and development in the service across all developmental areas.

Supporting relationships

- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. The inspector observed a child receiving comfort in the baby room when they found it difficult to go to sleep at nap time. The staff member offered reassurance by cuddling and rocking the child and communicated using soft gentle tones.
- In the older care rooms staff supported children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- Staff and parents worked in partnership within the service. The use of a child's profile form gave staff members valuable information about the child's likes, dislikes, daily routine, interests and family.
- The service used the teach cloud app to record daily routines and allows for direct communication with parents.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

(b) Suitable rest facilities were not available for the children requiring sleep in the Junior Montessori room 1 Junior Montessori 2 and Senior Montessori room 2.

Senior Montessori Room 2:

Individual sleep mats were not available for the children resting in this playroom, with 4 children having to share 2 sleep mats. Two other children slept on 2 other mats one of them been a yoga mat. The mats that the children were sleeping on were not suitable, the children were sleeping directly on the plastic matting void of any bed linen. Individual bed linen was not available.

Junior Montessori room 1

At 12:30 pm, 8 children were observed asleep on sleep mats that were void of any bed linen, the children were observed to sleep directly on the plastic covering.

Junior Montessori 2

At 2:15pm, 2 children were observed asleep on 1 large floor mat. This mat was void of any bed linen.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

New beds for the children requiring sleep have been purchased. Mats that were used previously for sleep will now be used for seating only in the playrooms. Frayed mats have been disposed of.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation evidence submitted to the 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 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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) The adult chair that was used by the adults in the Wobbler room was unsafe, it had to be propped against the wall, as the back of the chair was unsteady and was a risk to the staff using it.

Infection Control:

- (1) A number of the sleep mats used in both the Montessori junior room 1 and 2 and senior Montessori room 2 were frayed at the edges and posed a risk of infection as they could not be cleaned adequately.
- (2) The nappy bin in use in both the baby and wobbler room were not sealable, airtight and foot operated. This posed a risk of infection.

Safe Sleep:

1. The sleep temperatures of the baby sleep room were not maintained and kept at temperatures of between 16 °C and 20°C. The following temperatures were recorded throughout the session, when the sleep room was in use. At 12.52pm with 3 children aged under 12 months old sleeping in the room the recorded temperature was 21.7°C.
At 13.06pm and with 4 children aged under 12 months old sleeping in the room the recorded temperature was 22.5°C.
The manager in the service reduced the temperature in the sleep room by turning on the air-conditioning. At 13.40pm the temperature of the sleep room with 5 children sleeping in the room was 19.9°C.
2. Sleep checks were not recorded accurately in the baby and toddler room. It was recorded that a child went to sleep at 12:30pm in the baby room and no further records were documented until 1pm. It was noted that the app was not working in the toddler room. This posed a risk to sleeping children.
3. Sleep checks were not maintained in any of the following sleep rooms/playrooms- Junior Montessori 1 and 2 and Senior Montessori 2 when children over the age of 2 years of age were asleep. This posed a risk to the sleeping children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A new adult chair has been purchased.

Infection Control:

1. The frayed mats have been disposed of.
2. New nappy bins have been purchased.

Safe Sleep:

1. Air conditioning will be used to maintain the sleep room temperature between 16 °C and 20°C.
2. Sleep records will be recorded on tablets or in a book.
3. A logbook will be available to record sleep checks in the event of WIFI not been available.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Documentation evidence submitted to the Inspectorate.

Infection Control:

Documentation evidence submitted to the Inspectorate.

Safe Sleep:

Photographic evidence submitted to the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliances 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

- (2)(a) The registered provider had ensured that the service was equipped with first aid boxes, they were in each of the playrooms and in the corridor.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to children when required.

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, there were 12 staff trained in basic First Aid, 4 staff trained in Paediatric First Aid and only 1 staff member trained in First Aid Responder. However, this staff member was only rostered from 10 am to 3pm on the day. When this was brought to the attention of the manager. The staff member was asked to remain on the premises until close of business on the day, however there was no person with FAR training on the premises in the morning prior to 10am.

At least one person must be trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) and available to the children while the service is in operation. There was no trained staff member on the premises when this staff member was rostered off each day. This staff member started work at 10 am on the day of inspection but the service was in operation since 7:00am.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A FAR trained staff member is rostered to be on duty from 7am. An additional FAR trained staff member will remain onsite until 6pm. Two additional staff members are due to complete the FAR training in November 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation evidence submitted to the 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 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)(a) Written records of the fire drills undertaken in the service were kept by staff with the last fire drill recorded as having been undertaken on the 19/08/2025.
- (b) A certificate of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and a certificate for the servicing of the fire alarms was dated May 2025 and was available for inspection.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the playrooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had evidence in the form of a current certificate of insurance to state that the service had adequate insurance for the 91 children proposed to attend the service. The expiry date was noted as 27 March 2026.