

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD009				
Name of Service:	Birchwood Pre-School				
Address of Service:	Birchwood House, Ballytruckle Road, Waterford, Co. Waterford				
Eircode:	X91 HK85				
Name of Registered Provider:	Olivia O'Hanlon				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	13/01/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>3</td> <td>PM</td> <td>n/a</td> </tr> </table>	AM	3	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Office, Cork Rd, Waterford City, X1 VX09				
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw				
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

The service is based in an old church building on the grounds of what was formally a convent in Waterford city. There is one care room with sanitary facilities, nappy changing area and a designated food preparation space. The secure outdoor play area is adjacent to the premises. The sessional service is open from 09:30 to 12:30 and is registered to care for up to 16 children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service operates three days a week, Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday. Additionally, the service offers an afterschool programme for school aged children.

Staffing

The registered provider is the manager of the service and employs two early years staff. The registered provider does 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 area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 15 – Record of a Pre-School Child;

Regulation 16 - Record in Relation to a Pre-school Service;

Regulation 20 - Facilities for Rest and Play;
Regulation 24 – Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance;
Regulation 25 – First Aid;
Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures;
Regulation 28- Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15(1) – Record of Preschool Child, regulation 16(1)(h) Records of a preschool child and regulation 24 - Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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)(b)(c)

The service had a designated person in charge and a person to deputise if required. The management structure was displayed at the door of the service and was included in the service policies.

(2)

Following a review of information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider, the inspector reviewed three files, including the registered provider's file.

(c) Garda vetting was available for the three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.

(d) On a review of the staff files police vetting was not required.

(4) Evidence available demonstrated that the staff working with the preschool children had achieved at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework

Non-Compliance Information

(a)(b) Validated references were not available for two staff members.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that all staff references have been validated where possible. One reference was unable to be validated as the early years service is no longer registered. It was validated at the time of receipt but not signed off. They stated that going forward any recruitment of staff will have reference validation as mandatory.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted

Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on 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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)(3)

During the inspection and a review of staff and children's attendance records, there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

In the morning, two staff members were caring for three preschool children. The registered provider did not work directly with the children.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) On a review of six child registration forms, information required was not available. For example:
- Three forms did not include details regarding authorisation for the collection the children.
 - Four forms did not include details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, or information relevant to the provision of special care or attention.
 - Five forms did not include contact details for the child's doctor.
 - Three forms did not include a record of the child's immunisations.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that all early years forms are now complete with correct details. Going forward they will ensure all forms are complete before commencement in the future and all forms will be completed before commencement and will be double checked by staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentation submitted

Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

The details required from (a) to (i) was available to the inspector. The information was included in the service's Statement of Purpose, in the policy and procedure handbook, displayed at the entrance door, and included in the attendance record book.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
 - (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.
- (2) A registered provider-
- (a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The care room was designed in such a manner that it was free of clutter and planned so it could accommodate children to play individually, in small groups or together. Play equipment was organised in a way that supported the children’s play and learning. The large floor play space had a large car play mat with a garage and boxes of cars, truck and large push along wheeled toys. The home corner was furnished with a play kitchen and many accessories, and the adjacent table was dressed in a tablecloth and set up with play food and delph to encourage the children’s imagination play. Shelving was low and accessible to the children allowing them the opportunity to choose their materials, with low tables available to use for tabletop activities. The children had a wide variety of play material to choose from, for example, play animals, sorting and matching toys, jigsaws and blocks. Children’s individual artwork was displayed on the walls of the care room.
- (b) A large soft mat was placed away from the main play area beside the book shelving. Large wipeable soft cushions were available if the children required a break from play or to rest.
- (2) The staff stated that children accessed the outdoor area after break time each morning. The grassed outdoor spaces were fenced and secure with climbing apparatus and a sensory garden. The children also use the hard surface space for their wheeled toys.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) On a review of the attendance records over the previous two weeks, children attendance had been recorded.

(3) (a)(b) The door of the main building was locked on the inspector's arrival and monitored by reception staff in the office. The staff member explained how the parent's drop or collect the children at the door of the care room. The inspector was requested to sign the visitors book which recorded the time of entry and exit, the reason for the visit and contact details. These procedures mitigated the risk of unauthorised access.

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) The registered provider has ensured that a person trained as a first aid responder was available to the children at all times. Two staff members had up to date First Aid Responder training.
- (2) (a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the shelf in the care room.

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) Fire drills were completed monthly, and a written record of these was available on the day. The last fire drill was carried out on the 18 December 2025.
- (b) The maintenance records for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available for review. The firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 29 September 2025, and the smoke alarm was last serviced in December 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the care room, there was both a written and a visual evacuation procedure. Emergency contacts phone numbers were also displayed in case of an emergency.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate was available to review and had an expiry date of the 30 December 2026.