

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020CC004
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Name of Service:	Blossom Tree Pre school
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Address of Service:	O Mahony Avenue, Bandon, Co Cork
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Name of Registered Provider:	Noelle Harrington
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Office, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork. T23X440.
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter
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	N/A
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Description of service

Blossom Tree Preschool operates as a sessional service that also caters for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). The service caters for children aged between two and six years. The opening hours for the service are 09.00 to 12.00 hours and 12.30 to 15.30 hours daily. The service operates from one care room positioned in a one storey building that was purposely adapted as a childcare facility. There is an outdoor play area situated to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There were seven staff associated with this service. This included the registered provider who was present on the day of inspection, along with three of the seven staff who work directly with 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.

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(s) wish 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*

(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 registered provider had ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge was on the premises for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider arrived to the service shortly after the inspector and remained on site for the remainder of the inspection. The roster for the service demonstrated that either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were due to remain on site for the duration of the service.

2. Staff recruitment files were assessed for the seven staff attached to the service.

(a) Eight of the 14 references were available from a past employer, and had been validated.

(b) Six of the 14 references were available from a source other than a past employer, and had been validated.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. 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 not required for any of the staff members as no staff had lived outside of the state for longer than six consecutive months.

4. All seven staff members held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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) The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.
(3) On the day of inspection, it was observed that 15 children between the ages of 3.9 to 5 years were being cared for by three adults.

The service met the minimum adult to child ratios requirements during the inspection.

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.

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
I an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) The person in charge advised that a total of 36 children were enrolled at the service. A sample of 10 child record forms were assessed. Each form included all of the information, as listed from (a) to (i), which met the requirement.

(3) All 36 records were available for inspection by an authorised person on the day of inspection.

Part V – Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 – Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(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

1 (a)

Basic needs:

- Children had access to their water bottles at all times. Water bottles were stored on a low level windowsill in the care room.
- Children’s lunches were stored in a fridge from which the children retrieved them when they were hungry.
- Children’s toileting needs were attended to promptly and staff assisted children when necessary.
- Staff responded to children in low tones and communicated with them respectfully throughout the inspection.
- Children’s personal care was attended to respectfully and privately. For example, when one of the children fell in a puddle outside, it was observed that the staff member brought the child inside, retrieved their spare clothes and helped the child to change quietly before bringing them back outside.

- The staff working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment. For example, it was observed that when children had trouble sharing resources in the tuff tray, a staff member interjected and added more resources. This, along with speaking to the children in a calming tone, diffused the situation.

Supporting relationships

- Staff were observed to work well together, staff reported that there is time for them to meet to discuss children's needs and plan for activities.
- Through discussion with staff, it was noted that staff operate in partnership with parents. The service share information with parent's regarding their child, and the wider group, through the use of social media and a private messaging application.
- It was reported to the inspector that the registered provider and the person in charge regularly meet with parents to discuss each child's development.
- During the mealtime, staff sat and ate lunch with the children. It was noted that the staff and children engaged in social conversation with each other.
- Transitions from one activity to another were managed effectively throughout the inspection. Staff gave children a five-minute warning and then rang a bell. Upon hearing the bell, all children would place their hands on their heads, and the staff would then let the children know what activity they were moving to and ask them to tidy their work.
- Children's choice was respected during the inspection. It was observed that children could opt in or out of activities. Adult led activities were presented to the children, but it was observed that they were free to choose their own activities. This promoted independence and freedom of choice for the children. It also demonstrated respect for the child's voice.

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.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

1.

(a) The registered provider has ensured that there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and outdoors. It was observed on the day of inspection that the large playroom hosts a wide range of play equipment with ample numbers of resources available to children. The equipment is contained at child height making it accessible to all children.

There were clearly defined areas of play including, art, small world, tabletop activities, sensory play, library and a home corner. The outdoor areas were observed to be accessible to children on the day of inspection. The outdoor area was also laid out in such a manner as to encourage children to participate in different types of play. There was a bicycle track, a covered sand pit, slide and a free play area.

(b) There were adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day in the library area. This area was away from the main play area and was equipped with soft furnishings to create a quiet corner for a child to rest. Children were observed during the inspection to remove themselves from the larger group, take a bean bag and a book and rest in this area for short periods of time.

4. The outdoor area was observed to be an enclosed area for children to explore throughout the day. This area was accessible directly from the care room. The area immediately outside the care room had been fitted with a covering, to enable children to access the outdoors in wet weather. This covered area then led onto a fenced area

for further exploration. Through direct observation, this area appeared to be safe and secure with an abundance of play equipment. The area was secured with gates and fences to ensure children's safety.

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 main entrance was secured to prevent unauthorised entry to or exit from the premises.
- All heavy furniture was tethered to prevent them tipping over.
- All cleaning materials were stored on high shelves out of reach of children.
- Children's bags and coats were stored safely to prevent slips, trips and falls.
- All electrical cables were out of reach of children.
- Pull cords in the bathrooms were secured.
- Windows did not open too widely to avoid children falling or climbing out.
- All toys and play equipment were in a state of good repair

Infection Control:

- It was noted that the staff reminded children to wash their hands regularly throughout the day, particularly before lunch and when returning from outdoor play.
- The wash hand basins throughout the premises were provided with thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and electronic hand dryers. The water temperature was recorded at 39.1°C in one sink and at 38.5°C in another during the inspection.
- Pedal operated bins were in operation in the care room.
- Perishable food for the children's lunch had been refrigerated.
- The main care room appeared to be cleaned and well maintained.
- Tables were sanitised before and after the lunch break.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were clear of obstruction on the day of inspection.
- Wall tethered fire extinguishers were available 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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. The registered provider has ensured that a record has been kept in respect of
 - (a) Monthly fire drills, the last recorded fire drill for the service took place on 19th January 2026 and
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance records for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms for the service. It was noted that the firefighting equipment was last serviced in September 2025 and the smoke alarm was last serviced in February 2026.
2. These records were present and available to the inspector for review.
4. A notice of the fire evacuation procedure, along with a visual schedule for the children, was displayed prominently within the care room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The services' insurance certificate was available on the premises and demonstrated that the service was adequately insured. The information provided on the insurance certificate included details of the number of children covered daily which was 22. The start date, which was 28 March 2025, the end date, which was 27 March 2026. The certificate also stated the category of service covered which was sessional service and the name and

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address of the premises. The insurance cover also referred to details regarding, contents, public liability and fire and theft cover.