

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021CC001
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Name of Service:	Carleton Wharf Preschool
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Address of Service:	O'Brien's Place, Youghal, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P36 V049
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre O'Sullivan
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	03/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork. T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
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

Carleton Wharf Preschool was established in 2021. It is a play based service, that is registered to provide part time care for children aged two to six years. A registered school age service is also in operation. Two daily sessional services are facilitated, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme.

Located in the town of Youghal in Co Cork, the service operates from the ground floor of an apartment complex. There is one main care room and two interconnecting smaller rooms, which are used by the school age service. Children's sanitary facilities are available adjoining the care room. The setting also includes a staff kitchen, an office, an entrance area and staff and school age sanitary facilities. The outdoor play environment is accessible from the main care room.

Staffing

A total of eight adults are attached to the service. Five of these adults are involved in the day to day care of the early years children and one adult works solely with school age children. The registered provider can provide cover, if required, along with a relief staff member. There are two adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme. Three students were also undertaking work experience at the setting.

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.

Additional Information

During the inspection, it was established that some of the children had been accommodated to attend full day care hours. As the service is registered to offer part time care, the provision of these additional hours was not sanctioned. This matter was referred to the Services Operating Outside of Registration Status (SOORS) team, on 4 March 2025.

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 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

(1)
Review of the children's attendance records demonstrated that the service had been facilitating full day care hours, which it is not authorised to accommodate. As a registered part time service, Carleton Wharf Preschool can facilitate early years children to attend for up to five hours daily.

- From a sample review of 4 weeks attendance records, between 20th and 31st January 2025 and 10th and 21st February 2025, there were 8 dates on which at least 1 child had remained at the setting for longer than 5 hours. The records indicated that five children in total had attended full day care hours, over the four week period.
- It was also noted that the ECCE sessional hours in operation were at variance with the registered sessional hours, which were 8.20am to 11.20am and from 11.30am to 2.30pm. The sessional hours were found to be operating from 8.30am to 11.30am and from 11.30am to 2.30pm.

The registered provider had not notified the Agency regarding these changes and was therefore operating outside of the service's registration status. The issue of operating an unauthorised service type was found at the previous two inspections on 5 September 2023 and on 25 May 2021. Following the inspection on 5 September 2023, the issue was escalated to the Registration Office in relation to the breach of Regulation 8. On 4 October 2023, the registered provider submitted written confirmation that the service had reverted to providing part time care. However, this was not found to be the case.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The written reply from the registered provider stated that staff had omitted to sign out children after their ECCE session on the digital application. It also outlined that a proposed change in circumstances form was resubmitted to the CIC team, with the correct part time hours stated. The service has decided to reintroduce the manual write up of attendance records.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted.

Summary Comment

Based on the statements from the registered provider and confirmation from the CIC team that a change in the service's hours of operation has been approved, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met. This will be reviewed at the next 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) A designated person in charge had been appointed to the early years setting, along with a deputy, who could deputise as required. This information was available in writing.

(2) Recruitment records in respect of the eight adults and three students who worked at the service were reviewed. The following was noted:

- (a) Twenty-two written and validated references were required in total. Of these, 12 had been obtained from past employers.
 - (b) Four had been obtained from sources other than past employers and two of these references had been validated.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were in place for all eight staff and in respect of one of the students. Garda vetting was not required for the remaining two students. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Written evidence regarding the attainment of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, was available for six staff members. Qualifications were not required for the students, or in respect of the adult who worked solely with school age children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

Whilst it was acknowledged that either the person in charge or the deputy was available throughout the period of inspection, review of the staff roster indicated that there were periods when neither the person in charge nor the deputy were working at the setting, as required. For example:

- On Monday 24th, Wednesday 26th and Friday 28th February, the deputy did not commence work until 8.45am and the person in charge was rostered to begin at 9.00am on each of these days.

(2)(a)(b)

There were no records of validation available for the references held in respect of one adult.

Six written and validated references were unavailable in respect of the three students.

(d)

The relevant police vetting was on file for the three adults who required this documentation. However, the police vetting for two of the adults had not been translated into English, by a reputable source of translation.

(4)

Evidence was unavailable to demonstrate that one of the adults had attained a minimum level 5 award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b)

In her written response, the registered provider stated that there will always be either a deputy manager, or a manager, available to open up with the staff member on duty. The deputy manager and the manager will split their hours to allow for this.

(2)(a)(b)

The validation records were submitted. The two Erasmus students finished working at the service at the end of the week of the inspection. It will be ensured that all references are on file, before students commence at the service.

(d)

The written reply stated that the students who the police vetting related to, finished working at the service the following week. Going forward, it will be ensured that police vetting will be translated into English.

(4)

This staff member has completed her training and is awaiting the certificate. It will be ensured that all staff records are on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(b)

A copy of the staff roster, which demonstrates that either the person in charge or the deputy, are on duty throughout the service's hours of operation.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and validated references in respect of the adult.

One of the two required written and validated references for the third student.

(d)

The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

(4)

Written correspondence from the relevant college outlining that the staff member has successfully completed a QQI level 6 award and that certification is awaited.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and partial evidence submitted, are accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) During the onsite inspection, it was observed that a sufficient number of adults were involved in the direct care of the children.
- (2) At the time of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation. During the morning, there were 19 children, aged 3 to 5 years in attendance, with 4 adults available. In the afternoon, there were 4 adults working directly with 17 children, who were aged 3 to 5 years. In addition, the person in charge was available to provide cover as needed.

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:

- The mid-morning snack took place at 10.00am and an afternoon snack was observed shortly before 1.00pm. At mealtimes, the adults joined the children at the tables and provided appropriate assistance. A relaxed environment was evident and plenty of time was afforded, which encouraged the children to socialise with their peers, as they enjoyed their snacks.
- The children's reusable water bottles were stored in the fridge and were accessible to them throughout the morning, should they be in need of additional fluids.
- When accessing the adjacent sanitary facility, the children were supervised by an adult and self-care and independence were encouraged. The inspector was advised by a staff member that nappy changing was carried out during each sessional service and in response to a child's individual needs.
- Suitable outdoor clothing was worn by the children during their walk.
- The generously sized care room facilitated the free movement of children, as they initiated their chosen activities and explored various materials.

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

(1)

(b) Children who sought a quiet space to relax availed of the rest area, which was furnished with vinyl floor mats, sofas and cushions. An adjacent display unit was stocked with books and a selection of soft toys. Sleep mats were held in storage for any child who may be in need of sleep during their attendance. It was noted that the sleep mats were suitable for children aged over three years.

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:

- A key lock mechanism on the exterior of the main entrance door, reduced the risk of unauthorised access to the service. A buzzer system was in place for parents and visitors. The door from the care room to the main entrance area was controlled by a high-level door release button, which reduced the risk of a child exiting unsupervised.
- The service's outdoor play area was enclosed by fencing and the walls of the building.
- Low-lying glass panels were fitted with visibility strips.
- Restrictive opening devices were in place on cupboards that were used to store cleaning agents.
- There were no electrical cables, or trailing flexes within the children's reach.
- The first aid box was inaccessible to children.
- There were no blind cords in the care room.

Infection control:

- Regular handwashing took place throughout the day. This included after the children used the sanitary facility, after messy play, before snack time and after returning from the beach. The practice of hygienic handwashing and drying was supported by the availability of warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Perishable snacks were refrigerated, which reduced the risk of food spoilage.
- Wall hook storage was in use for the children's coats and bags. This ensured that such items were maintained above floor level.
- Adequate ventilation of the care room was ensured through an open door, which led to the outdoor play area.
- Tables were sanitised after snack time.

Fire safety:

- Since the previous inspection on 5 September 2023, the locking mechanism on the interior of the main entrance door had been replaced with a thumb turn lock and a door release button, which could be easily opened in the event of a fire.

Outing:

- During the morning of the inspection, the children and staff walked to a small beach area, located a short distance from the service.
- A charged mobile phone, which contained contact numbers for the children's parents, was brought on the outing, along with first aid supplies.
- The children wore high visibility vests and held hands in pairs during the walk to and from the beach.
- Good supervision practices were ensured by staff throughout the outing. For example, children were provided with frequent verbal reminders in relation to safety and once at the beach, a clear line was drawn to indicate a boundary for the children to play within.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) While it was acknowledged that there was a staff member trained in First Aid Response (FAR), the staff rosters reviewed demonstrated that this person was not available on a consistent basis. The adult who held FAR certification was rostered to work from 9.00am to 5.00pm daily, during the current and previous week. It was acknowledged that two other staff members held paediatric first aid certificates and that at least one of these adults was available when the FAR trained adult was not. However, a person trained in FAR is required to be available to the children at all times.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Two of the staff members have commenced the online section of the blended FAR training and the practical training day is being arranged. Once these staff members have completed the training, there will be three members of staff trained in FAR. This will ensure that a trained staff member will be available to the children at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Email correspondence with the FAR training facilitator, in relation to the scheduling of said training.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted by the registered provider are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements. The FAR certificates will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The available insurance certificate was valid from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025 and detailed cover for up to 22 children to attend at any one time.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

(e) Adjoining the main care room, there were two toilets and two wash hand basins, which were allocated for the early years children. The staff toilet facility consisted of one toilet and one wash hand basin and the school age children had access to a separate sanitary area, which was equipped with one toilet and one wash hand basin. A nappy changing unit had also been installed in this area, since the previous inspection.