

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2022DY003
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	The Little Willows Preschool
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Willows Football Clubhouse, Jamestown Road, Finglas
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D11 TF61
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Rachel Runswick
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	11/11/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	34	PM	32
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Area 1 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15   D15 CF9K
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	T. Nelson and C. Kerrigan
<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).

### Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

### Description of service

The Little Willows Preschool is a full day care service located in a residential area of Dublin 11 and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 56 children on a full-time basis aged 2 to 6 years old, Monday to Friday. The service operates two Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme sessional services in the Big Flowers care room from 8.30am to 11.30am and 12.45pm to 3.45pm.

The Little Willows Preschool operates from the ground and second floor of Willows Football clubhouse and has four care rooms. Little Buds and Big Buds are located on the ground floor, and Little Flowers and Big Flowers on the second floor, with each room catering for children in the 2 to 6 years age range. There are sanitary facilities located on each floor and further sanitary facilities are available for staff. A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to the front of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs 13 staff to work in the service, including the person in charge, and 12 staff who work directly with the children. The registered provider also works in the service. There were 11 adults present on the day of the inspection including a visiting student, the registered provider and nine staff.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 22, 23, 25 and 32. However, on inspection additional non-compliances which were identified under Regulation 30 and 31. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16(1)(h)(k) – Record in relation to Preschool Service.

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

This inspection was triggered as a result of information received to the inspectorate on the 6 November 2025.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
- (c) these Regulations.

#### Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that;

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A review of the roster showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear structure of roles and responsibilities in place, and this was outlined in job descriptions.

(2) The full files of a student and ten staff who were new to the service since the last inspection on the 28 May 2024 along with the Garda Vetting disclosure for a staff member whose file was reviewed on the last inspection were reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

- (a) Fourteen validated written references were available from recent past employers.
- (b) Eight validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 12 files reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) The ten new staff who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

(7) A review of documentation and discussion with staff showed that all staff had:

- (a) been provided with information and had received updates on the policies and procedures in the service required under Schedule 5.
- (c) been provided with information on topics including behaviour management, communicating with parents and safety.

## Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) One of the seven adults who had lived in a state other than Ireland for six months or more as an adult did not have international police vetting from that state available for inspection.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider reports the vetting had been mislaid. An application was submitted for renewed police vetting, and the renewed Police Vetting disclosure was issued on the 9 December 2025. The registered provider commits to ensuring there will be a digital and paper copy of all files maintained to prevent loss of files in the future.

## Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of Police Vetting disclosure.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 has been adequately addressed.

## 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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults available to the children attending the service to meet their care needs.

- There were 10 staff available to 34 children present on the morning of the inspection and 32 present in the afternoon.
- The registered provider and deputy person in charge were available to provide support across the rooms.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained correctly throughout the inspection. For example:

- There was a display of the required ratios in the care rooms.
- A review of the room attendance sheets showed there were sufficient staff allocated to the care rooms for the numbers of children in attendance.

## 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:*

*(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

*(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

*(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured the following:

(h) Attendance records detailing the daily arrival and departure of the children were maintained.

(k) Following a review of a sample of ten records, the registered provider ensured a full record in writing was maintained for recent accident and incidents.

(3) The records requested on inspection were made available for review.

## 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-*

*(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

(1)

(b) Appropriate and suitable care practices were observed, as evidenced by the following:

- Practices such as mealtimes were observed to be timely and pleasant experiences for the children. Documentary evidence showed meals provided were regular and varied, with a four-week menu plan available.

- The staff interacted with the children in a respectful, warm and sensitive manner. Appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication such as low tones, eye level contact, touch, clear instruction on expected boundaries and other strategies were observed. This was in line with the behaviour management policy which was reviewed on inspection.
- The experiences and activities provided to the children in the rooms were suitable to the age and stage of development of the children.
- Daily routines were available and were reflected in practice.
- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated via an online software application, and conversations at drop off and collection. A paper record was maintained of children’s food, toileting and daily activities.
- All children had access to the outdoor play area on the day of the inspection, where suitable clothing for the wet day such as wetsuits and boots were available to ensure a comfortable play experience.

### 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

The registered provider ensured there was adequate and suitable food and drinks available. For example:

- The service provided food for breakfast, mid-morning snack and tea. Parents provided a hot lunch which was reheated onsite in the service kitchen.
- The service followed a four-week menu plan for the mid-morning and afternoon meals, and the documentary evidence available showed there was a varied selection of food available, with alternative options for children with additional or alternative diets.
- Food offered throughout the day included breakfast on arrival, a mid-morning snack at 11.00am, dinner at 1.00pm and a tea at 3.00pm.
- Staff reported that there was additional food available if children were to forget their lunch from home, and that there were additional portions of food available. This was in line with the service policy which was reviewed on the day.
- Drinking water was freely available in the care rooms throughout the day.

## 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

The following measures were observed to be taken to safeguard children:

##### General Safety:

- The external door to the premises was secured on arrival to the service and throughout the inspection. The key to access the lock was easily visible and accessible to staff but out of reach of children. This restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- Cleaning products were observed to be stored out of reach of children.
- Up to date accident and incident reports were maintained in line with the service policy on accident and incidents.
- Care plans detailing children's allergies were displayed in a prominent position in the care rooms.
- The outdoor area was fully enclosed, and children were observed to be appropriately supervised on the way to the outdoor play area.

##### Infection Control:

- Children were observed to handwash after outdoor play.
- Liquid soap and individual paper towels were available at handwash basins used by staff and children.
- The premises were in a clean and hygienic condition and documented up to date cleaning records were available and displayed in the premises.

##### Safe Sleep:

- There was a supply of low beds suitable for the age range of children attending the service for those children who wish to sleep, however staff report that no children currently sleep while attending the service.
- There was documentary evidence available that sleep checks were completed for children when they did sleep.

##### Fire Safety:

- Up to date attendance records were maintained; accurately reflecting the number of children present. This assists with the safe evacuation of children in an emergency.

- The fire safety procedures were displayed in a prominent position in the care rooms.

**Outing:**

- Appropriate documentation detailing a recent outing to a park was available.

**Non-Compliance Information**

**General Safety:**

- A tall unit in the hallway on the second floor was not observed to be secured to the wall. This posed a potential risk of injury should it fall on a child.

**Infection Control:**

- There was no warm water in the three sinks in the sanitary accommodation on the ground floor. A temperature of 14.5°C was recorded by the inspector at 10.30am. Warm water is required for effective hand washing.
- The foot pedal mechanism on one of the bins in the sanitary accommodation on the ground floor was broken, requiring repeated hand touch of the lid of the bin. This increased the potential risk of cross contamination.

**Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

**Corrective & Preventive Action**

**General Safety:**

- Unit was removed from the hallway. The registered provider will ensure to risk assess furniture and high furniture will be secured to the wall.

**Infection Control:**

- The registered provider reports that the reset valve had not been reset after a fire drill the previous day. Once corrected the water in the sinks recorded at the between 39.1 to 41.5°C. The registered provider will ensure the water valve is reset after every fire drill.
- The bins in the sanitary area were removed and replaced with new bins. The registered provider will ensure equipment is checked on a daily basis.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

- Photographic evidence.

**Infection Control:**

- Photographic evidence.
- Photographic evidence.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) The service provided evidence that a person trained in First Aid Responder training was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school. There were also additional staff trained in paediatric first aid.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

*(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(2) The registered provider did not ensure there was a minimum clear floor space available for the number of children registered in the Little Buds room. This can impact on the safety and supervision of children. The room measures 22.3m<sup>2</sup> which can accommodate up to 9 children in the 2-to-6-year age range\*.

A review of the attendance log showed that up to 11 children were regularly present in the room at any one time.

\*2.35m<sup>2</sup> space required for each child in the 2 to 3 years age range.

2.3m<sup>2</sup> space required for each child in the 3 to 6 years age range.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider reports that some of the children in the room have reduced their hours to back to sessional hours which the room size allows for a period of up to 3.5 hours a day. Parents have been advised that any change in their service hours must be agreed in advance in order to meet service space requirements.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

none

#### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 30 has been addressed and will be reviewed on the next inspection.

### Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

#### Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

*A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:*

*(d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(d) The registered provider did not notify the agency of a recent incident in the service.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered providers immediately submitted a notification of incident form. The service will ensure to follow appropriate procedures and engage with Tusla if they are unsure.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of submission of a notification of an Incident.

#### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 31 has been adequately addressed.

## Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

### Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
  - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
  - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
  - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1) There was a complaints policy maintained which outlined the following:
- (a) The procedures to be followed when making a complaint.
  - (b) The way complaints would be dealt with.
  - (c) The procedures for keeping the complainant informed on how the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2) The registered provider reported that no complaints had been received to the service, but ensured:
- (a) A record system to manage potential complaints was available.
  - (b) That complaints would be handled in line with the service policy.