

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2022WW001
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Willow House Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Ballinahinch Woods, Ashford, Co. Wicklow
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A67 HW24
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Yvonne Tierney
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	27/05/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	39	PM	36
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Loughlinstown health Centre, Loughlinstown Drive, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. Condon and O. Quill.
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors
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### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

This private childcare facility is registered to provide full day care for pre-school children aged 0-6 years. The hours of operation are between 07.00 - 19.00 and the service may accommodate a maximum number of 77 children at any one time. The service is located in a two-storey standalone building and comprises of 5 care rooms, two sleep rooms, sanitary accommodation for both children and adults, a kitchen, staff room, 2 storage rooms, an office and an entrance hallway. On inspection four of care rooms were in operation, namely, Little Steps (age 1-2 years), Little Giggles (aged 2 years and 3 years), Little Stars Junior (age 2 and 3 years) and Little Stars Senior rooms (age 3 to 4 years). The outdoor play area for the service is sited at the back and side of the premises and car parking is provided at the front of the building.

### Staffing

Presently there are thirteen staff members in total. This includes the person-in-charge and a deputy person in charge, both of whom provide care of the children when assistance is needed, and a chef.

The general manager and the manager were not present when the inspectors arrived, however both arrived on site at 10:50 and remained on the premises until completion of the inspection.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection plan was to assess compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9(1)(a), (b), (2)(a)-(d), and (4) Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11(1), (2) and (8)(a) Staffing levels

Regulation 15(1)(a)-(i) and (3) Record of a Pre-school Child

Regulation 19 (1)(a)(b) Health welfare and Development of Child

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

Regulation 25 First Aid

However, on inspection additional non-compliances which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16(1)(i) Record in Relation to Pre-School Service and under Regulation 27 Supervision. 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 was issued to the Registered Provider on 27/05/2025 in relation to a non-compliance identified Regulation 23, General Safety.

A response from the registered provider was received and accepted 28/05/2025.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the general manager, 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)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were both on the premises throughout the inspection.
- (2)
- Documentation was reviewed in respect of twelve new adults employed:

(a)&(b) Two validated written references were available for eleven adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for thirteen adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Completed Police vetting was available for eleven staff members who had lived in another state for a period of at least six consecutive months.

(4)  
A record was available evidencing that all staff members who were employed to work directly with the children had 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.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) No references were available in relation to one adult employed.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b)

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

The two references for the adult have been checked and attached to their files

Please find attached all documentation which will be completed prior to the staff member's start date.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of two validated references.

#### Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in relation Regulation 9.

## 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) Throughout the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were thirty-nine children attending the service being supervised by seven adults on the day of inspection. The person-in-charge and the deputy person-in-charge were also available to provide additional assistance as needed.

(8)(a) The staff roster demonstrated two adults are on the premises at all times during the hours of operation

### 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 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 that a record in writing was kept of the information listed above (1)(h) - (k) in relation to the service.

(3) A record of details listed above under (1)(h) - (i) were available for 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

(1)(a)

##### Basic Needs of Infants and Children

- Healthy nutritious lunch and snacks in line with the healthy eating policy of the service were enjoyed by the children on the day of inspection. The children enjoyed creamy tomato pasta for their main meal which was prepared and cooked on site. Bibs were provided for younger children. In the Little Steps room staff sat with children during mealtime and provided assistance to some children as required. Self-feeding was encouraged and supported. Drinking water was provided with meals and freely available in all care rooms throughout the day.
- Younger children's nappies were changed at intervals and good engagement in conversation with the children was noted during this time. Older children used the toilet independently and assistance given if required.
- Sleep was facilitated for the younger children in a dedicated cot rooms and on low beds in the toddler room. Children were monitored every 10 minutes while sleeping by staff.
- Each room had access to the outdoor area where age-appropriate toys and equipment was available.

##### Supporting Relationships around Children

- There was evidence that the service worked in partnership with parents. The staff described how they communicate information to parents daily about their child's day through the use of a computerised application and information was also shared with parents at drop off and collection times.

### Physical and Material Environment

- The play resources available to the children were accessible, organised and stored on low level shelving which allowed the children to select and replace items and materials of interest.
- There was an adequate amount of age-appropriate furniture and equipment available in the rooms. Equipment included Montessori equipment, construction, push-pull toys, toy animals, puzzles and a library.
- There was evidence of the children's artwork on display in the rooms.
- A secure outdoor area with an artificial grass surface was located at the rear of the premises. Play equipment available include bikes, climbing frame, slides and sand play.
- An ambient temperature of 18.5°C – 20°C was maintained in the care rooms.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

In the Little Steps Room, where children were aged 1-2 years, appropriate and suitable care practices were not observed at all times during the inspection which was evidenced by the following:

1. It is acknowledged that the three staff in the room spoke to the children kindly, however the children's need for comforting was not met. While there were three staff present there were several occasions when children were not picked up when crying and in need of a cuddle, reassurance and sleep:
  - At 11:10 one child was crying for four minutes and not picked up and comforted by a staff member.
  - At 11:30 one child very upset and cried for 7 minutes appeared tired, rubbing her eyes and eyes closing. This child was not put into the cot room until asked to do so by the inspector. The staff member stated that the children are not picked up as it would cause the staff to have them "on their shoulder all of the time".
2. Children's nappies were not checked prior to sleep time. This caused unnecessary distress for two babies on the day of inspection.
  - At 12:05 one baby was crying loudly in the cot room. A staff member was trying to soothe the child by rubbing her back gently and the child continued to cry. When the inspector entered the room another staff member went to the child and picked the child up. The child had a soiled nappy.
  - At 12:15 another baby was crying in the cot room for 5 minutes. The inspector again entered the cot room. The child's nappy was then checked and was soiled.

3. It was observed during the morning that children chose toys to play with and were supported by staff. However, there was no planned activities with the staff to engage the children and stimulate their interest and imagination and extend their play.
4. Due to the size and layout of the room one child was observed to use the room as a running track. Although this child was requested to stop, the staff did not distract the child with another activity.
5. It was noted on several occasions during the inspection that children's noses were not wiped as needed in a timely manner. On two occasions the inspector asked staff to do so.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

##### (1)(b)

1.

#### Corrective and Preventive Actions

To improve the care provided to children, we have updated our policies to ensure that every staff member is fully aware of the appropriate steps to take when a child is upset. These updates include clear guidelines on techniques to be used when comforting a child. In addition, we provide internal training during staff meetings to ensure all team members fully understand their role and responsibilities in supporting children's emotional well-being. All staff will receive regular training during staff meetings on updated policies and techniques for comforting upset children to ensure consistent and appropriate responses. Clear guidance will be added to the induction pack for new staff and will also be displayed in each room for daily reference. Staff understanding will be monitored through regular supervision and team discussions.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Updated policy

2.

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

##### **Corrective Action**

The nappy changing policy has been reviewed, with an additional section added to specifically cover nappy checks before and during sleep. Internal training has been provided to all staff to reinforce this procedure. Reminder posters are displayed in the sleep areas, and the updated policy is also visible in the cot room for daily reference.

##### **Preventive Action**

Regular refresher training will be scheduled to ensure all staff consistently perform nappy checks before and during sleep times. Visual reminders will remain displayed in sleep areas and the cot room, and compliance will be monitored through routine supervision

## **Supporting documentation submitted**

Updated policy

3.

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

#### **Corrective Action**

To improve staff interaction with 1-2-year-olds, we introduced clear guidelines and provided internal training focused on active play engagement. Additionally, we will enrol staff in external training to further develop their skills in supporting children's play and development.

#### **Preventive Action**

Conduct regular observations and provide ongoing feedback to encourage staff engagement during play. During the recruitment process, prioritize candidates with early childhood qualifications to ensure they have the skills needed to meet the developmental needs of children.

## **Supporting documentation submitted**

Updated policy regarding attached Staff engagement with 1-2 Year old children during playtime.

4.

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

#### **Corrective Action**

To improve organisation and keep children consistently engaged, the room is divided using partitions to create two separate groups, allowing for better management of space and activities.

#### **Preventive Action**

We have implemented room partitioning to divide children into smaller groups, enhancing supervision and ensuring that all children remain actively engaged and well-organised during play.

## **Supporting documentation submitted**

Updated policy.

5.

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

#### **Corrective Action**

To ensure that children's noses are wiped regularly, we have discussed this practice with all staff members. Additionally, we have updated the Face and Hands Washing Policy to include the importance of cleaning children's noses on a regular basis.

## Preventive Action

We will closely monitor the implementation of this practice in the daily routine, and it will also be included in the staff induction pack.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Updated policy.

## Summary Comment

It is acknowledged that the registered provider has put steps in place to address the non-compliances as identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 19. As the non-compliances found were related to practice issues these will be re-assessed on next 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.*

## Compliance Information

### General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children.
- All cleaning agents were kept out of reach of children.

### Infection Control:

- Children were encouraged to wash their hands regularly including before lunch, after using the toilet, after nappy changing, and after outdoor play. Effective hand hygiene practices were observed in accordance with the services infection control policies and procedures.
- Each child's soother was stored in individual containers and were sterilised daily.
- Cleaning schedules were maintained in each care room and the environment was clean.

## **Administration of Medication:**

- No child received medication during the inspection. The staff members were knowledgeable regarding the procedure to be used if needed and documentation was reviewed which demonstrated that the procedure was adhered to.
- Written parental consent was available should temperature reducing medication be required to be administered to a child.
- All medication was stored in a safe place and was clearly labelled for each individual child.

## **Safe Sleep:**

- On the day of inspection, a sleep log was maintained every 10 minutes by staff detailing the physical checks carried out on sleeping children under 2 years of age.
- The temperature of the sleep room and the care rooms where children slept was in the acceptable range.

## **Fire Safety:**

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed. The procedure for evacuation was on display in each room.

## **Non-Compliance Information**

### **General Safety:**

1. At 12:20 in the Little Steps room a box of toy animals was noted and available to the children who were aged between one and two years. On examination of the animals a total of eight had their ears missing. These toys pose a serious risk of choking/inhalation to children of this age group. These toys were immediately removed from the room.

An Immediate Action Notice was issued on the day of inspection 27/05/2025 and a response was received on 28/05/2025.

### **Infection Control:**

2. In the Little Steps room, the staff members did not follow best practice in relation to the management of toys when young children of this age put them into their mouth as evidenced by:

- The Inspector asked a staff member how toys were managed when children of this age put them into their mouth. The staff member stated that it would be put in a “mouthing box” out of reach of children

and stored until cleaning. This box was located on a low shelf within reach of the children in the room and stored in the same area as all of their toys.

- The inspector observed a child with a toy in their mouth. This was taken by a staff member when prompted to do so by the inspector. The toy was not put into the “mouthing toy box” for cleaning.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

##### **1. Corrective and Preventive Action.**

The specified toys have been removed from the rooms. Additionally, all remaining toys have been checked to ensure that they are appropriate.

#### Infection Control:

2.

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action:**

The mouthing toy policy has been reviewed, and clear steps have been outlined to staff. This updated policy has been discussed and explained to each staff member to ensure consistent implementation. Posters have also been displayed in each room. Room leaders and management will regularly observe daily routines to ensure staff are following the mouthing toy policy. Spot checks will be carried out, and reminders will be given when needed. Staff understanding and adherence will also be reviewed during team meetings and supervision sessions.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### **General Safety:**

Policy regarding the management of mouthing toys.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 23.

This non-compliance will be reviewed on next 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

(1) Adults trained in First Aid Response were present and immediately available to the pre-school children.

(2)

(a) The first aid box for children was safely stored in an accessible and conspicuous position in the pre-school room.

(b) At all times the first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service.

### 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:*

*(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

#### Non-Compliance Information

The staff roster did not accurately reflect the staff who were present on the day of inspection as follows:

- One staff member who was rostered to work from 08:30 to 17:30 was not present but was working in another service.
- The person in charge was rostered to work in the service from 09:00 to 18:00. However, was not present in the service on arrival of the inspectors. She arrives at 10:50 after been informed by her deputy that an inspection was in progress.

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

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action:**

## Corrective Action

To ensure accurate tracking of staff hours and maintain safe staffing levels, it has been clearly explained to management that any changes—such as staff arriving late, calling in sick, or other reasons—must always be accurately reflected on the roster. A supporting policy has been created and implemented to guide consistent and precise recording of staff presence.

## Preventive Action

A formal policy has been implemented to ensure consistent and precise tracking of staff presence to maintain safe staffing levels. Senior management will also ensure that this policy is being followed by managers through regular monitoring and supervision.

## Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of staff roster policy.

## Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 16.

## Part IV – Information and Records

### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

## Non-Compliance Information

In the Little Steps room children were not supervised at all times as evidenced by the following:

In one of the toys boxes accessible to the children there was a number of “soft pads” for use as a fan. At 11:40 a child was observed by the inspector hitting another child on the back of the head with this toy. This was not seen by any of the staff. The child who was hit cried loudly and put his hand to his head. When this was pointed out to the staff in the room the child who was hit was comforted and it was agreed that these toys were unsuitable for this age group. However, they remained accessible to children in the room.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

## Corrective and Preventive Action

The Children Supervision Policy has been reviewed and discussed in detail with all staff to ensure children are supervised at all times, especially during free play. As part of this review, the “soft pads” have been removed from the room, and the remaining equipment has been checked to confirm it is appropriate and safe for children of this age group. To prevent future safety risks, staff will maintain in constant supervision during free play, all remaining equipment will be regularly checked for age-appropriateness and safety.

## Supporting documentation Submitted

Copy of the updated Children’s Supervision Policy

## Summary Comment

It is acknowledged that the registered provider has put steps in place to address the non-compliances as identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 27. As the non-compliances found were related to practice issues these will be re-assessed on next inspection.