

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022WW001
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Name of Service:	Willow House Childcare
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Address of Service:	Ballinahinch Woods, Ashford, Co. Wicklow
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Eircode:	A67 HW24
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Name of Registered Provider:	Yvonne Tierney
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Service type:	Full Day Care
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Date of Inspection:	08/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	30
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Loughlinstown Health Centre, Loughlinstown Drive, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Condon and O Quill
Title:	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
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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 all five of the care rooms were in operation, namely, Little Angels (age 15-18 months) 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 eleven 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 arrived at 11:00 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.

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 8 October 2025 in relation to Regulation 9(2)(c); Garda Vetting Disclosure was not available for one adult who had access to pre-school children in the service. A response from the registered provider was received on 9 October 2025 and accepted on the same date.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the operations 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 three new adults employed:
- (a)&(b) Two validated written references were available for three adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for two 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 two adults 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)
(c) No documentary evidence in relation to a Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for one adult employed. An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the Registered Provider on 8 October 2025 in relation to this.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(c) Corrective Action:

As immediate action, the staff member was removed from all duties involving contact with children pending receipt and verification of the Garda Vetting Disclosure. Once the disclosure was obtained and verified, the staff member was reinstated to work directly with children in the room. A copy of the Garda Vetting Disclosure has been attached.

Preventive Action:

Staff cannot commence employment or have unsupervised access to children until a valid Garda Vetting Disclosure is on file. An Employee Garda Vetting Checklist has been created and implemented as part of the onboarding process to ensure full compliance.

An internal audit template for staff files has been created and implemented to verify that all Garda Vetting and related documentation is in place. Internal audits of all staff vetting records will be conducted quarterly to ensure compliance with Regulation 9. A follow-up audit will be conducted three months after implementation to confirm that all current and new staff have valid vetting.

Management and recruitment staff have been provided with training on Tusla requirements for Garda Vetting and documentary evidence retention.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of checklist which will be used to ensure compliance regarding Regulation 9(2)(c).

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified on inspection in relation to 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-three children attending the service being supervised by eight 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 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)(b)

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 dinner. 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 warm engagement with the children was noted during this time. Older children used the toilet independently and assistance was given if required.
- Sleep was facilitated for the younger children in a dedicated cot room and on low beds in the Little Giggles room. Children were monitored every 10 minutes while sleeping by staff.
- The children in every room were observed enjoying their time outdoors while supported by staff. Age-appropriate toys and equipment were available suitable for the age and stage of development of each age group.

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.
- Warm, kind interactions were notes between staff and children during the day. One child who was upset was soothed by staff for a period and parents were called when child would not settle.

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.
- A secure outdoor area with an artificial grass surface was located at the rear of the premises. Play equipment available include bikes, see-saw, climbing frame, slides and sand play.
- An ambient temperature of 18.5°C – 20°C was maintained in the care rooms.

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:

- Each child's soother was stored appropriately and were sterilised daily.
- Cleaning schedules were maintained in each care room and the environment was clean.

Administration of Medication:

- Two children were administered medication during the inspection. The staff members demonstrated knowledge regarding the procedure used and the documentation required was completed according to the service policy.
- 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

Infection Control:

In one room three children's nappies were changed consecutively. The practices observed during nappy changing did not demonstrate best practice in relation to infection control as follows:

- During the nappy changing procedure the staff member did not wash her hands after changing each child's nappy.
- The children's hands were not washed after nappy change.
- The nappy changing mat was not cleaned after each nappy change.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Corrective Action:

The following actions were implemented immediately:

- **Hand Hygiene:** All staff have been reminded of the requirement to wash their hands thoroughly after changing each child's nappy. This has been reinforced through immediate supervision and refresher training.
- **Children's Hands:** Staff have been instructed to ensure that each child's hands are washed after nappy changes to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- **Nappy Changing Mat:** Staff have been reminded to clean and disinfect the nappy changing mat after every use. Additional visual reminders and checklists have been implemented at each station to ensure ongoing compliance.

Preventive Action

To prevent recurrence of this non-compliance ongoing supervision and refresher training has been put in place. Posters regarding handwashing have been displayed in each changing room as a visual reminder. Management will carry out spot-checks to ensure adherence to infection control procedures.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 23. As this is a non-compliance relating to staff practices, it will be re-checked 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.

Compliance Information

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

Compliance Information

The children present were supervised when indoors and outdoors at all times during the day.