

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC393
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Willowtree Childcare Ltd
-------------------------	--------------------------

Address of Service:	Willowtree House, Ballinvredig, Ballinspittle, Co. Cork
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	P17 HX53
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Olwyn Shorten
-------------------------------------	---------------

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

Date(s) of Inspection:	02/06/2026
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	53	PM	41
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Admin Building, St. Marys Health Campus, Gurranabraher, T23X440 Cork
Inspection undertaken by:	Jenna Russell and Deirdre Cotter
Title:	Inspection and Registration Manager and 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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Willowtree Childcare is a privately owned full daycare service that also provides sessional and part time care. It is registered to cater for children aged 0 to 6 years. It is currently offering care to children age 1 to 6 years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is accommodated over 38 weeks of the year. The service is currently operating for 40 weeks of the year. The registered daily opening hours are from 07:00 am to 18:00 pm, the service is currently operating from 08:00 am to 17:30pm.

The service is based in the rural area of Ballinspittle, near Kinsale in Co. Cork. The main prefabricated building consists of two care rooms; these are currently operating as the Toddler room and ECCE 1. There are also adjacent sanitary facilities, a lobby/kitchen area, and a sleep room in this building. This building also includes sheltered play areas, with sand play and dress up areas, a staff office, and sanitary facilities. A third care room, known as ECCE2/Under the Sky room is provided from a wooden cabin located in the outdoor area. There are three outdoor play spaces, including one large play area used by ECCE 2. There is a separate shed which had recently been converted into a staff room, with a separate laundry area for the service.

Staffing

There are 12 adults employed at the early years service, including the registered provider. All of the adults are involved in the direct care of the children. A contractor also works at the setting and was present at the 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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

A referral was made to the Fire officer regarding the recently converted shed into a laundry area and staff room.

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 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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

(1)

On the day of inspection, the service was found to be operating within its approved registration status. On the day of inspection, the service was operating within its registered hours of operation and in accordance with the age range of children and type of service. On the morning of inspection, there were 53 children present. In the afternoon, there were 41 children present. This is below the number of children the service is registered to accommodate.

A review of documentation from April 2026 to the date of this inspection was undertaken and a sample of 10 dates were selected. At no point did the service accommodate more than their registered number of children on any of these dates.

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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The registered provider was in charge of the early years service and a named adult had been assigned as a deputy.

(b) The deputy person in charge was on site when the inspectors arrived, and the registered provider arrived during the course of the morning. Staff sign in records evidenced that at least one of these people is on site at all times.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider, it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. These new staff members worked directly with the children. A total of two files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for two staff members, whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal, were requested for review.

(a) Four of the required references had been provided by past employers, three of which had been validated.

(b) None of the required references were from sources other than previous employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required for any member of staff as they had not resided outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4)

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Non-Compliance Information

- (9)
- (2) (a) One of the required references from a past employer had not been validated. This was evidenced through staff recruitment files. Failure to fully complete vetting procedures poses a risk to the safety of children.
- (3)
- Recruitment files indicated that vetting procedures had not been carried out prior to new staff being allowed access to or contact with children. One reference had not been verified as evidenced in (2) (a).

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

9 (2) (a) & 9 (3)

In her written response, the registered provider stated that the reference had been verified. The registered provider stated that this would be done going forward, and filed, before a staff member has access to children.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the verification of the reference was submitted. The registered providers statement was also accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (a) & 9 (3) 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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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.

The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

2.

On the day of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations.

The rooms were in operation as follows:

Morning :

Room name	Type of Service	Age Range	Number of children present	Number of adults required	Number of adults present
Toddler Room	Full Day Care/Sessional	1-3 years	13	3	3
ECCE 1	Full Day Care/Sessional	3-4 years	22	2	3
ECCE 2	Full Day Care/Sessional	4-5 years	18	2	3

Afternoon:

Room name	Type of Service	Age Range	Number of children present	Number of adults required	Number of adults present
Toddler Room	Full Day Care	1-3 years	11	2	3
ECCE 1	Full Day Care	3-4 years	16	2	3
ECCE 2	Full Day Care	4-5 years	14	2	3

8.

The registered provider has ensured that there was a minimum of two staff at all times on the premises. This was evidenced through discussion with staff on the day.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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:

(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)

(k) The registered provider has ensured that a record has been kept of any incident or accident involving a child. On the day of inspection, a sample of 10 accident and incident report forms were reviewed from across all age groups. Each of the 10 reports were in relation to accidents.

(3)

Each report was saved securely with the child's registration records. A template was printed and completed for each individual report before being stored. These records were open to the inspectors for review on the day of inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

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

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- The service promoted healthy eating and the food, provided by the parents, was noted to be healthy and nutritious.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- A relaxed and social atmosphere was evident throughout the three care rooms during the snack and lunch times, with lots of chatting noted between staff and children. The staff supported children as needed; feeding the younger children when required and helping older children to open food containers.
- Staff were attuned to the needs of the children in their care, and it was evident the children were comfortable and supported. Staff were noted to soothe and comfort upset children when required. Staff were noted to be patient, kind, and encouraging towards the children.
- Drinking water was noted to be accessible to the children throughout the day. Children's own reusable water bottles were brought from home daily. The service had a supply of drinking water available should refills be required.
- The children's need for rest and relaxation was met though suitable cozy areas in the classrooms where children could read books or relax.
- Children who required nappy changing were attended to at regular intervals and as required. Older children were noted to independently use the sanitary facilities, with staff available to support them if required.
- Indoor classrooms were set up to allow children to freely explore and choose materials that were of interest to them.
- The service had a focus on outdoor play, with extended time spent outdoors in the three outdoor areas on the day of 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:

- Entry to the service was restricted to prevent the unauthorised entry to the premises or the unsupervised exit of a child from the premises.
- Low level windows and doors were fitted with visibility strips.
- Blind cords were secured on all windows observed.
- Highchairs in the Toddler room were in good condition and fitted with safety harnesses.
- Flexes and cables observed were out of reach of children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Cleaning agents observed were stored on high shelves.
- All play equipment within the care rooms appeared to be in a clean state and of good repair.
- The outdoor area was securely fenced to prevent unauthorised access.
- Suitable handrails had been fitted where necessary.
- Staff were observed to check the temperature of food with a food probe while reheating the main meal of the day.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use throughout the service.
- Each sanitary area was fitted with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels. Water temperatures were recorded across the service to be between the ranges of 36.3° to 36.5°C.
- Perishable food was safely refrigerated.
- Windows were open in the care rooms to aid natural ventilation.
- Cots were fitted with mattress protectors to prevent the spread of infection.
- Sand pits in the outdoor area were observed to be covered when not in use.
- Cots were spaced the required 50cm apart.
- Cots were in a state of good repair.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff were observed to physically check on sleeping children at regular ten minute intervals.
- Records of sleep checks were recorded electronically and were available for review.
- Temperature within the sleep room while two children, over the age of one, were sleeping was within the recommended range at 20.7°C.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- Wall tethered fire extinguishers were available in the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The mud kitchen in the ECCE 2 outdoor area had a wooden hob area which was observed to be splintered, cracked and broken on the day of inspection. This posed a risk of injury to children.
2. The porch area of shed in the ECCE 1 outdoor area, which was accessible to children, had a hole in one of the floorboards. This posed a risk of injury to the children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Infection Control:

3. Barrier creams were not individually labelled in the Toddler nappy change area. It was observed that 6 tubs of barrier creams had been placed in a basket. Only one of these creams had been labelled with a child's name. This posed a risk of cross contamination to the children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that the mud kitchen had been repaired and cleaned.
2. The registered provider stated the area had been made inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

3. The barrier creams in the toddler changing area had been individually labelled and a person assigned to ensure the items are labelled in future.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographs of the clean and repaired mud kitchen, with the splintered hobs removed.
2. Photographs of a fence erected around the shed, making it inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

3. Photographs of the barrier creams individually labelled.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance's identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) The registered provider has kept a written log of all firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The smoke alarm system was last serviced in December 2025.
- 2.
- (c) The registered provider has ensured that records relating to fire safety are stored safely and are open to inspection by authorised persons.
4. The procedure to be followed in the event of a fire is displayed prominently within each main care room.

Non-Compliance Information

- 1.
- (a) The registered provider has kept a written log of fire drills which, upon inspection showed that the last recorded fire drill took place on the 14 April 2026. There was no record of a fire drill carried out in November and December of 2025, and no record of a fire drill carried out in May 2026. Failure to adequately prepare children and staff for the occurrence of a fire poses a risk to the children's safety.
- (b) Evidence available on inspection showed the fire extinguishers in the service were last serviced in April of 2025. Failure to properly maintain firefighting equipment, by annual servicing poses a risk to the safety of the children in the event of a fire.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) (a)
- In her written response the registered provider outlined how fire drills would be recorded monthly in future.
- (1) (b)
- The registered provider stated that the fire extinguishers had been serviced previously, but a certificate had not been received. The registered provider has had the fire extinguishers reinspected.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered providers statement is accepted along with the updated certificate of maintenance of the fire extinguishers.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 26 has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured for 66 children, valid until 27 March 2027. The records detailed the category of service covered, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.