

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW024
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Name of Service:	Little Orchard
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Address of Service:	Seskin Road, Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 KN72
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Name of Registered Provider:	Thomas Lalor
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Service type:	Full Day
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Dates of Inspection:	11/03/2026
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Date 2 of Inspection:	12/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	66	PM	40
Day 2	AM	66	PM	N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
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Inspection undertaken by:	E Cullen
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

This full day care service is in Leighlinbridge village. A service is provided to children aged from 6 months to 6 years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5:30pm (including an Early Years Care and Education Programme (ECCE) sessional service from 9.00am to 12.30pm). A registered school age service is also provided. The premises is a detached four storey building with seven early years rooms. There is an additional prefabricated classroom at the rear of the building, two designated sleep rooms, and several outdoor play areas for the use of the children attending the service.

Staffing

The service currently employs thirty staff members, which includes a management team, early years staff working directly with children, a cook, cleaner, maintenance person and early years community employment scheme participants. The registered provider does not work directly with children in the service. Staff members held qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care at Level 5, 6, 8 and 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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– Management and Recruitment, 11– Staffing levels, 15 – Record of a pre-school child, 16 - Record in relation to pre-school service, 20 – Facilities for rest and play, 21 – Equipment and Materials, 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child and 28 – Insurance. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 and 16. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the following rooms: little acorns, willow, hawthorn and maple.

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days 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.

(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)(b)(c) There was a designated person in charge on the day of inspection, and a named person was available to deputise as required. An organisational chart provided details of the management and reporting structures within the service. Information was available detailing the role of each staff member and specific responsibilities such as fire officer and designated liaison person for example.

(2) On review of documentation and discussion with the management team it was determined that thirty staff members were currently employed in the service.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available for each staff member from either a past employer, or from a source other than a past employer.

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

(4) Certificates of qualification were available on file demonstrating that staff members working directly with children held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (d) International police vetting was available for eight staff members who had lived outside the state for a period over 6 months. Three of the eight documents presented were not available in English or Irish.

(3) The registered provider did not take appropriate measures to ensure that all employees were suitable to work in an early years service prior to their commencement. Eighteen references available for twelve staff members were not validated prior to them commencing work in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) Translation of three international police vetting sought by staff concerned and now on file. Little Orchard policies have been revised to ensure that translation of international police vetting is a stated requirement within the relevant policies.

(3) All current employees have two references on file that confirm that they are suitable to work with children. Little Orchard policies and procedures have been revised to ensure that all reference checks are carried out prior to employee commencing work.

Supporting documentation submitted

Vetting documents and policies on garda vetting, risk management, selection and recruitment and child and adult protection.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified has been adequately addressed. Implementation will be reviewed on next inspection.

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) Over the duration of inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children at all times. On day one there were 66 children with 17 staff members directly supervising them during the morning and 40 children with 9 staff members in the afternoon. On the morning of day two, there were 66 children with 18 staff members.

(2) Staff to child ratios were maintained as follows on the morning of day one:

- The Little acorns room, there were 5 children aged 6 to 13 months old being cared for by 2 staff.
- The Willow room, there were 8 children aged 13 to 24 months old being cared for by 2 staff.
- The Holly room, there were 4 children aged 2 to 3 years old being cared for by 2 staff.
- The Hawthorn room, there were 11 children aged 2 to 3 years old being cared for by 3 staff.
- The Maple room, there were 10 children aged 3 to 5 years old being cared for by 2 staff.
- The Cherry Blossom room, there were 10 children aged 3 to 4 years old being cared for by 2 staff.
- The Beech room, there were 7 children aged 4 to 5 years old being cared for by 2 staff.
- The Perfect Pear room, there were 11 children aged 3 to 4 years old being cared for by 2 staff.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) – (i) Prior to a child commencing in the service, all parents and guardians were issued with a child registration form. This registration form was developed by the service and contained all of the required information for parents and guardians to complete.

A sample of twelve child registration forms were reviewed on the day of inspection, and all were completed in full with appropriate declarations signed by parents and guardians.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) – (k)

The registered provider ensured that all relevant information was accessible and available for inspection by authorised persons. Information stations in the entrance lobby displayed relevant staff information, the Tusla registration certificate was on display providing confirmation of the class of service registered. Staff rosters were available on a staff notice board.

Each early years room was responsible for maintaining records of attendance, administration of medication and any accident or incident records. Policies and procedures were available for staff in the office and a parent's handbook was also available.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There were adequate and suitable facilities available for the numbers of children attending the service. The eight early years rooms were clean and well organised. There was consideration given to the layout of the rooms, to ensure children could play together in groups or individually. Children’s play and learning was supported through defined areas of interest and adequate materials and resources.

(1)(b) There were two sleep rooms available for children in the little acorn (baby) and willow (wobbler) rooms. There were four cots in the wobbler sleep room and five cots in the baby sleep room. Low-level beds were available across the service to meet the sleep requirements of children over the age of two years in the service. Dedicated cosy rest areas were available for rest, with couches, cushions and other soft furnishings.

(3)(a) Children had access to several outdoor play spaces in the service. The willow and hawthorn rooms could directly access enclosed outdoor play areas from their respective early years rooms. There was an all-weather surface area to the rear of the main building, enclosed with a small shelter. Adjacent to this was a larger enclosed grass garden with paths and shelters. A section to the rear of this garden was enclosed with fencing and an artificial grass surface dedicated to the play of younger children and babies. The play spaces were free from hazards and equipment was safe for use by the age groups of children in attendance.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The early years rooms were bright, warm, and homely, this was achieved using natural materials and neutral colours. Rooms were personalised to each group with through the display of works of art and their recent learning. Well laid out library areas included books, dress up materials and puppets were available for use by the children.

Low-level open shelving units were used to create areas of interest in each room. Children could freely access materials and resources from the labelled shelves, A range of play-based materials were offered in the home corners, small world play, sensory zones, and puzzles areas of the rooms.

Furniture in each room was chosen to meet the needs of children in each group, tables and chairs for example were at suitable heights for the age ranges of children. Highchairs were provided as necessary. Activity trays were available at varying heights.

Outdoors children had access to a range of wheeled ride on toys, mud kitchens, a large sand pit, tree house, water, playhouses, slide, raised planting beds and picnic benches.

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:

There was a keypad and buzzer entry and exit system in place on the main entrance door of the building to prevent unauthorised persons gaining entry or children exiting unsupervised. Staff members in the office monitored the entry and exit of persons to the service. The kitchen and staff areas were inaccessible to children. All cleaning agents were stored safely and out of reach of children.

Accident and incident books maintained a record of any incidents, these were completed in detail and signatures confirmed that relevant parents, staff and a manager were informed.

All blind cords were securely mounted out of reach of children. Room temperatures were monitored in each room by staff, temperatures were maintained between the required 18°C to 22°C in the early years rooms.

All highchairs, tables and chairs used by children were in good condition and suitable for use by the age range of children using them. Equipment and materials used in each of the rooms were appropriate for use by the age range of children using them, for example small items which may pose a risk of choking were not observed in room occupied by younger children. The outdoor play area was maintained to a good standard and free from hazards.

Warm water used by children for handwashing was thermostatically controlled and maintained below 43°C. A temperature of 33.5°C was recorded.

Infection Control:

The service was clean and well maintained with cleaning schedules maintained daily by staff. Children were observed washing their hands before eating, after outdoor play, toileting, and nappy changing. There was warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand washing throughout the service. Each room

had designated children's toilets or a nappy changing area. Hand washing facilities were adequately stocked with paper hand towels and liquid soap.

A system was in place for the appropriate storage and sterilisation of children's soothers. Tables and equipment were cleaned prior to food being served to children and appropriate safe food storage and preparation was observed. Cots and low-level beds were observed to be spaced the required 50cm apart.

During nappy changing processes observed, staff adhered to the services nappy changing policy. Staff ensured that they wore gloves and aprons during the nappy changing process and both child and staff hands were washed after nappy changing had taken place.

Administration of Medication:

Signed medication record books documented the details of any medications which had been administered in the service in line with the service policy on administration of medication. Medications supplied by parents were stored securely and inaccessible to children. Detailed and easily identifiable health care plans were in place where required across the service. Staff members demonstrated awareness of the medical needs of children in their care and the necessary precautions to take and steps to take in an emergency.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were familiar with best practices in safe sleep and carried out physical checks on individual sleeping children, every 10 minutes, recording individual children's sleep positions, colour and breathing. A staff member remained in the sleep room while children were sleeping on low level beds. The sleep room temperatures were continually monitored by staff, with a digital thermometer located in each sleep room. Staff demonstrated awareness of the services sleep policy which was displayed in the sleep room.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Three-foot pedal bins in sanitary accommodation areas did not open with the foot pedal, the lids were disconnected from the base unit and staff members were observed to use their hands to open bin lids posing a risk of cross-infection.

2. A section of plaster was missing from a wall behind a nappy changing unit, leaving the raw concrete exposed. This surface could not be cleaned effectively to prevent cross-infection.

Safe Sleep:

3. On day one of inspection the baby sleep room temperature was recorded at 22.4°C prior to children under one being placed to sleep. This was brought to manager's attention and remedial actions were put into place including managing the room heating and the addition of cooling devices. A section of the care rooms was maintained between the required 16-20°C and children were placed to sleep there as an interim measure. Later in the day, the sleep room returned to the required temperature. On day two of inspection, the sleep room temperature was within the required limits.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. All nappy bins are in working order within the service. Upon changing the bin bag in the nappy bin, the foot pedal and the lid can become disconnected. A memo issued to all staff to state that upon changing the bin bag in the nappy bin to ensure foot pedal and lid are connected and that all nappy bins are to be operated by foot pedal only.
2. Section of wall with broken plaster with concrete exposed has been repaired and repainted. Memo issued to all staff to remind to notify management of broken or damaged equipment.

Safe Sleep:

3. Corrective actions were taken on the day, as noted by the inspector. Due to recent refurb of heating system prior to last winter, the temperature of the baby sleep room can fluctuate as we come into the warmer months of the year now. The temperature is monitored throughout the day by staff and corrective actions such as correct ventilation and cooling devices such as portable air conditioning unit are used, as well as monitoring the heating and turning off/boosting as necessary throughout the day. Contacted plumber who refurbished the system to enquire about fitting individual thermostats to radiators in baby room sleep area. Once thermostats are fitted to radiators in the baby sleep room it will be possible to control the temperature in the sleep room more easily. As we are coming into the early summer and the heating system will not be required, it should not be an issue to control the temperature in the room due to radiators, while we await the plumbing works to be carried out. We have a plan in place entitled the acorn room temperature action plan which outlines these points and is displayed within the room currently.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photographs and memos to staff members.

Safe Sleep:

Photographs and acorn room temperature action plan.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified has been adequately addressed. Implementation will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated insurance cover for a full day care for 103 children. The insurance policy commenced 28 March 2025 and will expire 27 March 2026.