

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015DR058
--------------------------	-------------

<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Willows Academy
-------------------------	------------------------

<b>Address of Service:</b>	24 Willow Rd, Wyckham Park, Dundrum, Dublin 14, Co. Dublin
----------------------------	--

<b>Eircode:</b>	D16 KC86
-----------------	----------

<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Pauline Kelly
-------------------------------------	---------------

<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time
----------------------	---------------------

<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	09/12/2025
----------------------------	------------

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	35	PM	34
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	H Sutherland
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
---------------------------------	----------------

### Description of service

Little Willows Academy is a privately owned full day care service and is one of three services operated by the registered provider in South Co Dublin. The service is located in an urban, residential area of Dundrum. Care and education are provided to children aged between 1 and 6 years and the service is open from Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 5.30pm. Little Willows Academy is a purposely adapted, two storey commercial property and comprises of four care rooms and a dedicated sleep room. The children have access to an outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

There are currently 12 adults employed to work in the service. On the day of inspection, there were 11 adults present. The person in charge arrived after the inspection commenced but did not stay for the duration of the inspection. A manager from another service also arrived after the inspection commenced and remained present to facilitate the inspection. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Toddler and Senior Montessori rooms.

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 managers, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

## Part III – Management and Staff

### Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-*

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

*(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-*

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*

- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

*(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 service had a designated person in charge and two named persons to deputise if required.
  - (b) The deputy person in charge was on the premises for the duration of the inspection. Review of the staff roster confirmed that there is always a person in charge or a named deputy person in charge on the premises during the operational hours of the service.
  - (c) There was a clear management structure that identified the lines of accountability and authority within the service. This was confirmed during conversations with staff.
- (2) Following a discussion with the person in charge it was confirmed that ten adults commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 3 August 2023. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2), (3), (4) was reviewed in respect of the ten adults as detailed below. The requirements of Regulation 9(2)(c) relating to Garda Vetting was reviewed for all adults employed to work in the service.
- (a) Sixteen written and validated references were available from past employers.
  - (b) Four written and validated references were available from sources other than past employers.
  - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 13 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.
  - (d) Police vetting was available for eight staff members who had lived outside of the State for a period of six months or more as adults.

(3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had been carried out prior to the ten adults commencing employment in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the ten adults who work directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

*(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that, there was an adequate number of adults working with the children attending the service.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained throughout the inspection. There was 8 adults working directly with 35 children in the morning, and 8 adults working directly with 34 children in the afternoon.

### 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

The service had a healthy eating policy, and the person in charge confirmed that the service provides breakfast and a hot meal, with parents providing two snacks daily. A menu detailing meals provided to children was displayed in the hallway of the service. On the day of inspection, children were observed eating yogurt, rice cakes, and fruit for their morning snack and spaghetti bolognese for their dinner. Staff sat with children during mealtimes and engaged in positive and meaningful conversations. Younger children were supported to develop self-feeding

skills. Older children were encouraged to take an active role in mealtimes, for example, by tidying their plates and cups away when they had finished their meal. Drinking water was freely available to children throughout the day, and children were offered water with their snack and dinner.

Children's care needs were met in a timely and responsive manner. For example, the inspector observed staff promptly responding when children needed to use the toilet, required nappy changes, or became upset.

Children's nappies were changed on a schedule, morning, afternoon and evening and additionally as required.

Older children were observed using the toilet independently, with staff remaining close by, offering reassurance and support where needed. Children in the Toddler room slept at a designated time after lunch, and staff reported that children could sleep outside these times if they displayed signs of tiredness. Rest areas were available in the care rooms for children to take a break from activities if required

Staff were observed to model positive dispositions such as kindness and patience in their interactions with children. For example, they spoke to children in warm tones, used the children's names and provided children with time to respond during conversations. Staff were familiar with children and responded to their verbal and non-verbal cues. Play was child led, and children were observed to move freely around the care rooms, leading their own learning experiences. The service uses an online application to share key aspects of the children's day with parents, such as, information on meals, sleep, nappy changing and activities. Staff explained that parents also have the opportunity to discuss their child during morning and evening handovers.

The indoor environments were laid out to support children's learning and development. Appropriately sized furniture, including low level tables, chairs and shelves, enabled children to engage in activities comfortably. Storage boxes were labelled, supporting children to independently select and tidy away resources. Materials available to the children included, home corners, musical instruments, dress up clothing, transport, mark making materials, small world materials such as animals and dolls, tuff trays and rest areas with books. Manipulative resources were available across the care rooms to promote fine motor skills. Some of which included puzzles, and interlocking shapes. The outdoor area was equipped with materials to support children's physical development and their understanding of nature. For example, bikes, a balance beam, a slide, a playhouse, a kitchen, a bug hotel and a planting area were observed in the outdoor area.

## 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 entrance to the service was adequately secured to prevent unauthorised access, or children leaving the service unattended.
- The outdoor area was secured with high walls and a locked gate.
- Toys and play equipment used by the children were in good condition and free from pinch points and sharp edges.
- Cleaning products were stored safely out of reach of children.
- The kitchens on the first floor and ground floor were inaccessible to children.

##### Infection Control:

- Warm water, single use paper towels and liquid hand soap were available in the sanitary areas.
- Effective handwashing practices were observed throughout the inspection. For example, children were observed washing their hands following nappy changing, using the toilet and before meals.
- The nappy changing area was clean and well maintained, and both vinyl mats were observed to be intact with no tears.
- Individual labelled storage was provided for children's belongings.
- There were pedal operated bins throughout the service.
- Cot mattresses were covered with waterproof protectors.

##### Administration of Medication:

- There were no medications administered on the day of inspection. However, staff adequately described the procedure to administer medication, and the previous records available indicated appropriate procedures were followed when administering medication.

##### Safe Sleep:

- Staff were aware of safe sleep practices and were observed to carry out physical checks on children sleeping in the cot room every ten minutes.
- Documentation reviewed evidenced that staff checked children's breathing patterns, their position, the colour of their face, and the room temperature.

- The temperature of the cot room where children over 12 months of age were sleeping was 21.3°C.

## Fire Safety:

- Staff adequately detailed the procedures to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.
- Staff explained that the daily registers were taken with them during evacuations. During the inspection, the registers were reviewed, and it was evident that all children present in attendance were recorded as present.
- The fire exits were unobstructed on the day of inspection.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

### Infection Control:

2. An armchair in the Toddler room was observed to be heavily soiled posing a potential risk of the spread of infection.
3. During nappy changing, a staff member was observed to re-dress a child and clean the nappy changing mat wearing the soiled gloves used for nappy changing. This practice was previously identified as non-compliant at the last inspection on 3 August 2023 and poses a risk of the spread of infection.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

The registered provider stated that the following corrective and preventive actions have been implemented.

1. Garda vetting has been obtained for the staff member. The files will be checked on an ongoing basis to ensure all vetting is in date.

#### Infection Control:

2. The chair was removed and has been replaced with a wipeable chair. Soft furnishings will be continuously checked to ensure there is no damage to them.
3. A new nappy changing policy has been put in place and all staff have been trained in the procedure. Spot checks will be carried out to ensure the correct procedure is followed.

## Supporting documentation submitted

### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting record submitted.

### Infection Control:

2. Photograph of the new chair.
3. Copy of Nappy changing procedure.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed and the regulatory requirement has been met.

## 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) There was evidence to show that two adults currently hold certification in First Aid Responder training, one of whom was on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

- (2)
- (a) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and stored safely in an easily accessible and prominent position in the hallway.
  - (b) The first aid box was observed to be readily available to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

### 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.*
- (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) The registered provider ensured that fire safety measures were in place in the service.
- (a) A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on 3 November 2025.
  - (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was up to date. Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were last serviced on 14 November 2025.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were prominently displayed in the care rooms and hallways throughout the service.