

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR059
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Name of Service:	Little Dale Academy
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Address of Service:	19-21 Dale Road, Kilmacud, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A94 K8W7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Pauline Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	53
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland, 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

Little Dale Academy is a private early years service located in an urban area in South County Dublin. The service operates from a purpose-adapted two storey building and comprises of five care rooms, two sleep rooms and an outdoor area to the rear of the premises. On the day of inspection four care rooms were in operation. The service is registered to provide full day, part time, and sessional care and education for children aged 0 to 6 years and a school age service in the afternoon. Opening hours are Monday to Friday from 8am to 5:30pm.

Staffing

There are currently 22 adults employed to work in the service including the person in charge and a cook. On the day of inspection there were 21 adults present including, 18 adults working directly with the children, the person in charge, the cook and the registered provider. The registered provider does not work in the preschool 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, 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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*
- (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 a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and the person appointed to deputise were on the premises during the inspection.
 - (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Following a discussion with the person in charge and review of the staff roster, it was confirmed that 12 staff members commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 19 June 2024. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2), (3), (4) was reviewed in respect of the 12 staff members as detailed below. In addition, Garda vetting for three staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal and a staff member employed to work in the school age service were requested for review.
- (a) Twenty-two written and verified references were available from past employers.
 - (b) One written and verified reference was available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 16 staff members. 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) Documentary evidence showed that 11 staff members had lived in a state other than Ireland for more than 6 consecutive months as adults. International police vetting from the relevant countries was available for 10 staff members.
- (4) Documentation was available to show that the 12 staff members employed to 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). Two staff members held letters of eligibility to practise from the DCDE.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (b) Although a reference from a reputable source was available for one staff member, it had not been appropriately verified.
 - (d) Documentary evidence reviewed showed that one staff member had lived in two jurisdictions outside the State for a period of more than six consecutive months as an adult. Police vetting was only available for one of the two jurisdictions.
- (3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had not been carried out prior to two of the staff members commencing employment in the service as detailed above.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (b) The registered provider has verified the reference and will ensure that all references obtained by the service are accompanied by written verification going forward.
 - (d) The staff member has made attempts to obtain Police vetting but has not received a response from the organisation in question. The registered provider has completed a risk assessment and is satisfied with the staff member's suitability to work with children.
- (3) The service manager and assistant manager will review the documentation provided by future employees and will request a copy of Police vetting where it is identified that the staff member has lived outside the State for a period of six months or more as an adult. In circumstances where the registered provider is unsuccessful in validating a reference, alternative avenues will be explored to obtain a reference from another source.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (b) documentation received
- (d) Evidence of attempts made to obtain police vetting.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance in relation to Regulation 9(2)(d) remains outstanding as Police vetting has not been submitted to the inspector to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt.

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) On the day of inspection, there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs.

(2) The minimum adult-to-child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection. There were 18 adults working directly with 55 children in the morning, and 17 adults working directly with 53 children in the afternoon.

(8) The roster provided to the inspectors by the person in charge showed that a minimum of two staff members were on the premises at all times during the operational hours of the service.

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-

(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

The registered provider ensured appropriate and suitable care practices were in place, as detailed below. Staff reported that the service provides breakfast and a hot meal, and that the parents provide a morning and afternoon snack. Drinking water was freely available in the care rooms and was offered to children with their meals. Children were observed to confidently take on helper roles at mealtimes and displayed a sense of responsibility while completing their tasks. Staff were observed sitting with children during mealtimes and actively encouraged self-feeding, supporting children to be independent. Children were encouraged to take a role in their own personal care, supporting the development of their self-help skills, for example using the toilet independently, washing their hands, removing their shoes in preparation for sleep and cleaning their face after meals.

Children's nappies were changed on a schedule and as needed. Staff were observed to be nurturing and attentive during this time, ensuring the children felt safe and secure. Areas with rugs, cushions and child size sofas were available in the care rooms allowing children the opportunity to rest or take a break from activities. Children requiring sleep were offered the opportunity to rest at a designated time after dinner. Staff reported that children could sleep outside this time if they displayed signs of tiredness. The lighting was dimmed in rooms where children slept and the environment was conducive to sleep.

Play was child led and children were observed to move confidently around the care room and appeared content in their interactions with one another and their environment. During this time staff were observed to be warm, respectful and playful in their interactions with the children. Children engaging in outdoor play were observed to be appropriately dressed for the weather.

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 doors to the service were adequately secured to prevent unauthorised persons from entering and to ensure children could not exit unsupervised.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored safely out of children's reach.
- Attendance records were available for review and were completed accurately.
- The storage facilities were inaccessible to children.
- The staircases were adequately lit, the floor covering was non-slip, and appropriate handrails were in place.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use in the sanitary areas to support the safe disposal of waste.
- Liquid soap, warm water and single use paper towels were available to support effective hand hygiene practices.
- Staff and children were observed engaging in appropriate and consistent hand-washing routines.
- The care rooms were visibly clean and well maintained.
- Perishable items contained in the snacks provided by parents/guardians were stored in the fridge.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated an awareness of the procedures to take to ensure medication is given safely if needed, including obtaining written parental/guardian consent.
- Administration of medication records were available for review and contained details of the medication given, including parental consent, the signatures of the staff member who administered the medication, and the staff member who was present as a witness.

Safe Sleep:

- Standard cots were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children’s developmental needs.
- Staff were observed to carry out physical checks on sleeping children every ten minutes.
- A sleep log was available for review, detailing the room temperature, breathing pattern, colour and position of the child.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were clearly marked and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.
- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. During the inspection, it was identified that not all staff in one of the care rooms were fully aware of the procedures to follow for a child with a serious allergy. Although a care plan was in place and the inspector acknowledges that staff understood how to respond to a serious allergic reaction, two of the three staff members were unaware of the medication available and the symptoms displayed for the child in the event of a mild allergic reaction.

Failure to have full knowledge of a child’s medical requirements could result in delayed or inappropriate treatment.
2. 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 Renewal of Garda Vetting.
3. It was observed that electrical cables were not out of reach of children in the Playgroup room posing a potential risk to the children’s safety.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The staff within care room, as well as the floating team, have been retrained on recognising mild allergic reactions and the procedures to follow. The child’s allergy, potential reactions, required medication, and

all associated procedures were fully reviewed to ensure that all staff are confident with the procedures going forward.

2. Garda vetting has been obtained for the staff member. The registered provider has created a chart for the office notice board detailing the vetting expiry dates to ensure that re-vetting timeframes requirements are met. This chart will be checked regularly.
3. The electrical cables have been safely secured out of reach of children. Staff were reminded of the importance of ensuring that all cables remain inaccessible at all times, and additional safety checks have been incorporated into the service's daily inspection routines.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentation submitted
2. Copy of Garda vetting
3. Photograph of cables safely secured

Summary Comment

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

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 hold certification in First Aid Responder training, and both adults were available 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 office.
- (b) The first aid box was observed to be easily 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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*
- (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)
- (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 12 January 2026.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises were up to date. Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were serviced on 14 November 2025.
- (2)
- (c) The registered provider ensured that the required records were readily available and open to inspection by the inspectors.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the care rooms and the hallway in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was adequately insured, evidenced by a current certificate of insurance relevant to the type of service being operated.