

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH031
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Name of Service:	Little Oaks Early Years Limited
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Address of Service:	St Fursey's National School, Marlbog Road, Haggardstown, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 AP98
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Bogan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	30/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	18
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood
Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Little Oaks Early Years Limited is a privately owned service that has been in operation since June 2014. The service provides full day care and education to pre-school children from 2 to 6 years of age. The service caters for a maximum of 44 pre-school children from 7.30 am to 6.15 pm each weekday.

This service operates from within a pre-fabricated structure which is located on the grounds of St. Furseys National school, Haggardstown, Co. Louth. The premises consists of 2 large playrooms, namely the Leaf Room and the Acorn Room with adjoining sanitary accommodation, a kitchenette, and a storage area. The service has access to a purposely developed, enclosed outdoor play area to the front of the prefabricated building. A small area is also located to the rear of the premises and is currently undergoing development work

Staffing

The registered provider and 10 childcare staff work directly with the pre-school children on a daily basis.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 20, 22, 25 and 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.*
- (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 named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge who is also the registered provider and deputy person were on the premises when the inspector arrived on the premises and were present throughout the inspection.
- (2) There were 11 staff files presented for inspection and the following were reviewed:
- (a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for each of the 11 members of staff which included the registered provider.
- (c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff employed in the service.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that each member of staff, who works directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(d) Documentary evidence of the required international police vetting was not available for 1 staff member in the service who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period greater than six months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

International Police vetting was previously on file and was misplaced during the transition to the new premises. A new application has been lodged. The application is done through the postal service and can take up to 30 working days to be processed.

Files will be regularly checked a kept updated

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. It is acknowledged that an application process has begun to acquire international police vetting. However, until the inspectorate is furnished with the required documents, Regulation 9 (2)(d) remains non-compliant.

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) During the period of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the day of inspection when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 10.45am there were two care rooms in operation, namely:

- **The Acorn Room:** There were 19 preschool children aged 3 years present with 4 staff members.
- **The Leaf Room:** There were 17 preschool children aged 4 years present with 4 staff members.

The registered provider was also present in the service and was engaged in catering and administrative duties during the inspection.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children’s attendance records this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times

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) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children’s learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

- The toilet trained children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- The children were observed to move freely in the care rooms, and they also had a change of environment into the outdoor area on a number of occasions. All children were dressed appropriately to go outside.
- While no children were observed to sleep during the inspection, the children spontaneously accessed the couch to take a break from activities or to read a book.
- Tissues were available in both care rooms and attention was given to personal care such as nose blowing, and cleaning faces.
- Individual care plans were available for children who required additional support in the service and staff were familiar with the interventions and strategies required to support the children’s development.

Supporting Relationships

- The staff throughout the service were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children in both rooms and transitions between activities were organised and swift. The language used by the staff in the service was positive, e.g., 2 children were having a minor disagreement over a peg board during table top activities, the staff member was observed to support the children to sort out the issue and redirect the children to find a positive solution “...why don’t we see if we can get some more pegs ...will we ?.... Encouragement and praise were offered to children who completed tasks or engaged in an activity e.g. during a table top activity one staff member “*well done guys.... they are very good ...they are very colourful...*” Staff sat with the children during activities at tables and on the soft couches and children were observed to actively seek out staff members. Equally, children who did not wish to partake in a particular activity were also supported.
- Parents and guardians were informally communicated with at drop off and collection times. The staff informed the inspector that that most communication with parents is carried out through an electronic interlinked application set up between the service and the parents. Information pertaining to the children’s care needs, activities, learning stories and photographs are shared with parents through this method. For example, one child who had constructed a “beetle” with plastic blocks requested a staff member to send a photograph to their parents. This was facilitated by the staff member who responded to the child stating “...I will send that now...that is brilliant...well done”. Social media is also used to enhance communication between the service and home.
- The staff were observed to work well as a team. When questioned the staff reported regular meetings to plan and communicate with each other in relation to the activities and children’s needs.

Physical and Material Environment

- Child sized furniture and equipment was in use throughout the service.
- An adequate amount of age-appropriate materials and equipment were available in the care rooms to support child led play and development such as fine and gross motor skills, role play, speech and language and sensory development.
- Toys and equipment were positioned on open low-level shelving in all of the rooms, which promoted independence and also facilitated choice for the children in both care rooms.

Programme of Activities:

- Many of the activities observed during the inspection were child led and the children were facilitated to make their own choices regarding some of the stories that were read or songs that were sung. For example, one child who did not wish to engage with the larger group and wanted to engage in water play was facilitated to do so for as long as they wanted to, and the staff were observed to regularly check in with the child that were okay.
- During the inspection transitions between activities, outdoor play and care practices were observed to be familiar and swift, with the children being positively supported and encouraged by the staff.
- Ongoing observations and documentation of the children’s interests informs the curriculum planning. Documentary evidence was on display in the care rooms of the daily routine inclusive of short and medium-term plans. The identified themes were reflective of the activities being carried out.

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-

(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)(b) There were soft comfortable areas in both rooms which consisted of a soft couch and cushions, where a child could sit and relax on or take a break from an activity. Although not accessed during the inspection sleep mats were available for the children over 2 years of age to access if required.

(3)(a) There were 2 outdoor play areas on the premises:

- **Area 1** There was an enclosed outdoor area to the front of the building which the children were observed to access during the inspection. This area had a safety mat surface and was gated and fenced. A variety of pieces of play equipment and well supported interest areas were available that promoted many areas of development. For example, this included a wooden boat play house, a climbing wall, a mud kitchen, ride on equipment, a picnic table and a shed which included a variety of additional toys and equipment.
- **Area 2** is located to the rear of the premises. This area was not accessed during the inspection and the registered provider stated that it is currently undergoing development works.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The morning snack/lunches for the children attending the pre-school rooms were provided by the parents and were observed to consist of sandwiches, rolls, fruit, crackers, and drinks, with perishable items stored in the fridge. Staff were familiar with the requirements for children who had special dietary needs.
- Potable drinking water was available at all times for the children and staff.
- The registered provider stated that main meal for those attending on a part-time or full day care basis was provided by an external catering company and reheated by the service. The meal on the day of the inspection consisted of fish fingers, sausages and mashed potatoes. The children who requested more food at dinner time were provided with extra portions.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate was not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service. The following observation were made:

Infection Control:

1. The children attending the Acorn room did not have their hands washed on return from morning outdoor play time. On return to the care room the children immediately returned to playing with the toys. This is a cross infection risk.
2. When questioned staff were not familiar with the appropriate care of mouthed toys in the service. In addition, the cleaning and disinfection routine on display in the service did not detail the appropriate management and care of mouthed toys as per best practice guidelines

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. Hand washing routines, policies and procedures have been refreshed with every team member. Reminder posters are printed and on display in every room.
2. The cleaning routine has been updated in line with HPSC Guidelines on Management of Infectious diseases in Childcare Facilities and other Childcare Settings. All staff have been familiarised with the updated cleaning routine. The cleaning routine is printed and on display in each room.
Regular refresher of cleaning routines and infection control policies will be done with all staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the updated cleaning routine for the service.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances have been addressed, however implementation and sustainment of the actions will require assessment at the 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.*
- (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) The registered provider ensured that a person trained in first aid (First Aid Responder) was always available to the pre-school children.
- (2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were adequately equipped and available to the children attending the service at all times

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence of an up-to-date insurance certificate was available in the service and detailed adequate cover for 46 children on a full day care basis, which expires on 27/03/2024.