

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MH131
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Oak Childcare Ltd
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Cockhill Road, Stamullen, Co. Meath
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<b>Eircode:</b>	K32 H798
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Suzanne Caldwell
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	26/08/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	24	PM	23
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S Mc Kenna
<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
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### Description of service

Oak childcare is a privately owned service operating since 2007. The service provides full day, part time, sessional and school aged care and education to a maximum of 54 children aged 0 to 12 years. The service is registered to operate from 7.45am to 5.30pm and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The building is a residential converted property consisting of 3 care rooms in the main building, named Wobbler room & Toddler room which are both located within one large care room, divided by low level shelving units, Front Preschool and Back Preschool, and 1 care room in a separate building in the outdoor space named Garden Preschool. On the day of inspection, the Front Preschool was not in use, and the Garden Preschool had school age children present. The service also has a cot room, kitchen, sanitary facilities, staff room, office, storage, and laundry rooms.

### Staffing

The service employs 13 staff to include the registered provider, 11 childcare staff and a cook.

### 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 Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 27 Supervision and Regulation 28 Insurance. However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16 Record in relation to Pre-school Service. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used on this inspection under Regulation 19 and Regulation 23. The Front Preschool room was closed on the day of inspection, the Garden Preschool had School Aged children present therefore these two rooms were not reviewed upon inspection.

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 registered provider, assistant manager, 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) The service had a designated person in charge, who is the service manager and a named person to deputise in their absence who is the assistant manager.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge on the day of inspection, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, a display board in the front hallways and through discussion with the staff team.

(2) The files for 13 staff were reviewed.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references were on file for 12 adults.

A total of 19 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

A total of 5 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 13 staff. The registered provider 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) A review of the employment history for 13 staff, demonstrated that 2 adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the 2 staff was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 12 staff employed, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for the cook was not required.

## Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

There were no written references on file for one adult.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

Manager and registered provider has reviewed all staff files. Reference have been received and verified for staff member who was missing references. Manager and deputy manager reviewed induction process. Templates are used for induction and reference validation. Review of all staff files and templates used for all future inductions.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Two validated references.

## Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 9.

### 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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed;

- In the Wobbler & Toddler rooms located in one large care room, divided by low level shelving units, with two play areas for children of different ages, A total of 3 adults cared for 12 children aged 1 year to 2 years 7 months, all of whom attended on a part time or full day care basis.
- Two adults cared for 12 preschool children in the Back Preschool room, aged 2 years 6 months to 4 years 6 months, all of whom attended on a part time or full day care basis.

In addition to the above, a total of 13 school aged children were present, and cared for by 2 adults.

The assistant manager covered in the Wobbler & Toddler care rooms for nappy changing cover, support at sleep times and lunch cover.

The registered provider attended the service in the afternoon for the feedback meeting following inspection.

(8) A review of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

## 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:*

*(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(h) Records reviewed did not adequately reflect the attendance of each child on the day of the inspection.

One child in the Back Preschool room had not been signed in upon their arrival. It is acknowledged that when the inspector brought this to the attention of staff at 10.30am, the record was updated.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Registered provider and person in charge reviewed the signing in process with the team. It was acknowledged that internet issues can at times cause issues with signing in. Internet booster ordered to ensure team can use the tablets for sign in more efficiently. Deputy manager assigned to reviewing attendance records every half hour in the morning to ensure all children are checked in on time. Deputy manager has taken on responsibility for additional checks on attendance as part of morning operational procedures. Internet booster in progress for installation to mitigate any technical issues. Internal review of digital application to see if this is fit for purpose moving forward.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of new daily operational procedure detailing checking of attendance.

Copy of staff meeting agenda.

#### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 16 (1) (h).

### 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

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

##### Basic Needs

- Snack and meal times were observed to be unrushed. The children had croissants, fruit, wheaten bread and bananas for morning snack, and a hot lunch of rice, tuna and sauce at midday. An afternoon snack of fruit was served at 2pm, and pasta bolognese was scheduled to be served at 3.15pm. The staff were observed to sit with and support children where needed. Meals were adapted in line with children's dietary requirements. Drinks were accessible to the children during their day and at snack and meal times.
- Older children were observed to use the toilet independently. The toilets for the Back and Front Preschool rooms are located off the hallway, and staff from the Back Preschool room were observed to go with the children to the toilet providing supervision and any additional help that was required. Younger children had their nappies changed in line with their personal routine. The staff were observed to talk to the younger children during the nappy changing process and were observed to comfort and reassure a child that was upset.
- Younger children were provided with bibs at meal times, and faces were observed to be cleaned afterwards. Aprons are available for messy play activities, and spare changes of clothing is available where required. The children attending the Back Preschool were observed to have sunscreen applied by staff while in the outdoor area in the afternoon, when the weather changed from grey and overcast to sunny and warm.
- Children in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms availed of a sleep after their lunch at approx. 12.30pm daily. Children were supported by staff to sleep, and comfort was provided when required. Rest areas of soft mats and cushions were provided in the care rooms to allow children to rest during the day.

- The children in the Back Preschool room played indoors and outdoors intermittently during the inspection and an open-door free flow system between both areas was observed in place. The children in the Toddler room played outdoors on a few occasions during the inspection. The staff in the Wobbler room advised the inspector that they participate in outdoor play in the afternoon times.

### Supporting Relationships

- The atmosphere in all of the care rooms was warm and inviting. A few children had transitioned to new care rooms, and some new children were settling in to the service. The children were all observed to play and explore happily in their indoor and outdoor learning environments closely supported by the staff.
- The children appeared familiar with the staff who cared for them, and there was minimal changeover of staff observed. The staff team were observed to communicate and work well together ensuring times of transitions such as indoor to outdoor and preparing for snacks and meal times were smooth.
- The staff were observed to act as positive role models for the children. They engaged in soft interactions, got down to the children's levels to provide supports, and provided many opportunities for comfort and reassurance to the children such as sitting on the floor and nursing and cuddling younger babies. The adults who cared for the older children were supportive throughout play, providing extra materials where needed such as water for role play in the outdoor area.
- Where a child became unwell the staff were prompt to realise this and treated the child's with approved medication, provided a space for the child to rest and remained close with the child until their parent arrived.
- Communication with parents is in person upon arrival and collection, and also through the use of a digital application. Information shared with parents included the food, sleep and play routines and activities of the children.

## 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

The registered provider ensured all reasonable measures were put in place to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending such as:

#### General Safety:

- The front entrance door to the service was locked upon the inspectors arrival.
- The outdoor play area was observed to be free from hazards.

- Play materials and equipment were observed in good repair.
- Risk assessments were completed and available for review.
- Storage areas were inaccessible to the children.
- Floor coverings were presented in good condition.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored out of reach of children.
- Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

### Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated bins were provided for handwashing purposes. Hand washing was observed following children using the toilet and after nappy changing procedures by both the staff and children.
- Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the services policy, and in adherence to infection control measures such as the use of gloves and individual disposable aprons were observed in use.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated through means of openable windows.
- Fridges were available for the storage of children's perishable snack items taken in from home.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review and completed up to date.
- External waste bins were stored securely in an area that was inaccessible to the children.

### Safe Sleep:

- A cot room with 6 cots, individual bed linen and cellular blankets was available.
- Sleep records detailed the sleeping child's skin colour, breathing pattern, sleep position, time checked and staff signature.
- Cots and floor mats were labelled for children's individual use.
- Floor mats were provided for children attending the Toddler room to sleep on, with individual bed linen.
- Children who slept on floor mats were observed to be supervised at all times.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 13 staff members including the registered provider. However, 2 of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The gate that leads into the outdoor area at the rear of the premises, where staff advised that parents drop and collect their children from, had a high-level turn handle. Although the turn handle was out of the reach of

children, it did not prevent or restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. The care rooms located directly off the outdoor areas were not secured to prevent unauthorised access.

- Three electrical leads from plug sockets of a temperature device, a fan and a cooling unit were accessible to children in the cot room, the leads were located next to 2 cots, which poses a risk of injury to a child.

### Infection Control:

- The children in the Toddler room were observed to come directly in from outside to have their lunch. No handwashing was observed before children were served their food, which poses an infection control risk.

### Safe Sleep:

- Sleep checks reviewed did not adequately record sleep checks every 10 minutes as per the services safe sleep policy. On dates reviewed (19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2025) the sleep checks were recorded on occasion at 13, 14, 15 and 20 minute intervals.
- Sleep equipment provided for children under 2 was not suitable. Two children aged 1 year 9 months and 1 year 11 months were observed to sleep on floor mats. Children aged 15 months upwards can sleep on a floor bed, once a care plan has been completed and the bed is fitted with a mattress of at least 6cm in thickness. There were no care plans available for these two children to demonstrate consultation with parents/guardians for the transition of their children from a cot to a floor bed.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

- Staff members were re-vetted immediately. All staff files reviewed and excel document created to monitor garda vetting expiry.
- Registered provider reviewed security, and all doors are locked, and parents/guardians will knock on windows/doorbell for entry. This is an interim plan as we upgrade the external security. A construction company have been contacted to replace all external fencing in order to provide additional security.
- Educators in the Wobbler room moved plugs and cords attached to wall. Review of cords is added to daily checks for the team.

#### Infection Control:

- Person in charge addressed handwashing with the team immediately and importance of infection control was discussed. Health and Safety officer will continuously monitor infection control procedures.

### Safe Sleep:

(5) Registered provider shared sleep safe guidance with team members immediately. Review of daily process accessed. Team members will move to paper-based log to ensure this is more accurate.

(6) Parents had been updated in a verbal manner for all children transitioning to a sleep mat. This was updated with a written Individual Sleep Plan for children who were under two on a mat. Thicker mattresses were ordered for children under two. Team reviewed Guidance for ELC on sleep provision for children under 24mths to ensure they are up to date and confident on requirements. Forward planning will be in place for all new children starting and transition from cot to mat will be implemented moving forward.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. Two Garda vetting certificates submitted.
2. Letter from construction company confirming plans to undertake the replacement of fencing and gates at the premises. Copy of staff meeting agenda re; Security.
3. Photos of lead removed and secured.

#### Infection Control:

4. Copy of staff meeting agenda re; Infection control (hand washing).

#### Safe Sleep:

5. Copy of staff meeting agenda re; Sleep Safe Guidance.
6. Written sleep plans for two children submitted.

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider, and the controls put in place have adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23 and will be reviewed in practise upon 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

(2) (a) & (b) Suitable equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations within the care rooms and available at all times.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider had not ensured that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. The one staff member who holds in date FAR training was rostered to work until 4.30pm on three days of the week of the inspection and was rostered to be off on leave for two days. It is acknowledged that a person with in date Paediatric First Aid training is present from 8.15 to 5.15pm daily on the weekly roster reviewed.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(1) The roster was reviewed immediately, and qualified staff member was willing to reschedule leave. New staff member with FAR hired into the service. Registered provider booked FAR training immediately for x 8 staff members and this has commenced. Total of 10 staff members will be FAR trained by end of month to ensure no gaps on the roster.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Invoice for First Aid Response Course for dates; 13th September and 18th and 25th October 2025 for 8 staff. New staff member in date FAR certificate.

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 25 (1).

## 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) (a) A record of the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 03 July 2025.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers, and the smoke alarms was dated November 2024.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

## Part VI – Safety

### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection the inspector observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance while in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

## Part VI – Safety

### Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 54 pre-school children attending the service on a Full Day Care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.