

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WW235
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Name of Service:	Little Oaks
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Address of Service:	21 Upper Vevay Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow
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Name of Registered Provider:	Laura Scanlon
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	26/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	6
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Early O'Brien & S Faherty
Title:	Early Years Inspector and Inspection Registration Manager

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	N/A
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Description of service

Little Oaks is a privately owned part-time service operating from an adapted single room on the ground floor of a commercial premises in Bray, Co. Wicklow. There is an enclosed outdoor area, a small storeroom and sanitary accommodation. The pre-school is registered to provide care and education to children aged between 2 years and 6 years of age. The service operates from 9:00 to 14:00. A sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme operates from 09:00 to 12:00, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. An afterschool service is also in operation.

Staffing

There are three staff members employed in the pre-school service including the registered provider. Two staff members were present on the day of inspection.

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/ records/ health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(4) Management and Recruitment

11 (1)(2)(8)(a) Staffing Levels

19 (1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child

23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

25 First Aid

26 Fire Safety Measures

28 Insurance

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under regulation 29, Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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 inspectors wish 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

(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 registered provider works directly with the children and there is a named person appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 09:50am on the morning of the inspection and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Following a discussion with the registered provider and a review of three staff files it was confirmed that there were no new employees since the last inspection on 11 May 2023.

Documentation was reviewed in respect of all adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b) Six written and validated references were available as required. Five were available from a past employer and one from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff members demonstrating that the service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting is not required as there was no evidence to suggest that any adult employed in the service had spent time outside of the state of Ireland for a period of more than six months as an adult.

(4)
All three adults employed in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the inspection.

On the morning of inspection there were 15 children attending the preschool room being supervised by 2 adults and on the afternoon of inspection, there were 6 children being cared for by 2 adults.

(8)(a)

There were at least two 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

Compliance Information

Basic Needs

Healthy eating is promoted in the service and children bring their own lunch from home. Water was available to the children from their own bottles.

On the day of inspection, children were encouraged to open and close lunch boxes and bottles and be responsible for their own belongings. Snack time was a social experience during which time the staff member sat at the table with the children engaging in social conversations with them.

Children are encouraged to use the toilet and engage in handwashing independently with assistance provided where needed.

Supporting Relationships

As the children were cared for by the same adults, this enabled them to form secure relationships, attachments and develop their confidence and autonomy within the service.

The children appeared happy and content and were engaged and relaxed within the care room and in the outdoor play area. The staff members ensured that the children were supported in all aspects of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and demonstrated warmth, kindness, and respect in all interactions with the children. The staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and teamwork. Children were comforted when needed.

Physical and Material Environment

The indoor environment was laid out in such a way that children had easy access to resources and interest areas within the room such as a home corner, a dress-up area, a play kitchen, a library area with a couch, an arts and crafts and mark making station and a construction area.

A family tree containing photos of each child’s family was displayed on the wall at their level in the cosy area of the room. A birthday wall chart was on display and a community wall containing photos of people and buildings that children are familiar with in the local area.

On the day of inspection children were engaged in a colouring activity relating to their current theme on “Mother’s Day” presented to them on a low table which was adequately resourced. The children were also observed to be playing with kinetic sand and sea creatures in tabletop activities.

The children enjoy time in the outdoor play area daily and the equipment and materials available provided appropriate learning opportunities for the children based on their age and stage of development. This area was adequately supervised, safe and secure on the day of inspection. Children were observed to have autonomy in leading their play choices without the direction of the staff member. In this area children have access to a playhouse, a slide, scooters, a sandpit, small world resources and a messy play activity in a large tray on a stand.

Programme of Activities

During the inspection it was evident that children’s individual choice was respected in the daily routine in which they are encouraged to participate. While the service offers a Montessori curriculum, children are free to engage or not. There are picture cues and visual displays on the wall at their level to support them to make decisions on their play throughout the day. Children were observed to make choices on their own play materials within the environment, engaged in movement activities and relaxing activities both individually and as a group.

Positive language was observed to be used across the staff team and with the children. Language development was supported in discussions observed both at snack time and in the outdoor areas where the adults encouraged the children to use words to describe their thoughts and feelings. Children handled transitions well and it is evident that they are familiar with the daily routine of the service based on observations on inspection.

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 door to the service was appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school.
- The outdoor play area to the rear of the premises was walled and gated to prevent children exiting unsupervised to the lane behind the service.
- The outdoor area was suitable, safe and secure.
- All cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children.
- Children had no access to the storeroom area in the service.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate handwashing for staff and children.
- Good hand washing practices were observed after toileting and before eating.
- Foot pedal bins were available throughout the service for the safe disposal of used hand towels and other waste products.
- Children's coats and bags were stored on a low-level shelf.
- Tables were observed by the inspectors to be cleaned after snack time when the children left to play in the outdoor area.

Administration of Medication:

- There are no children attending the service who require medication. On the day of inspection, staff explained that they do not administer medication and clearly documented the procedure in the event of a child falling ill, in line with the service policy.

Safe Sleep:

- While children attending the service do not routinely sleep, there are cosy areas available for them to take a break from activities. This area consists of mats and cushions.

Outing:

- The registered provider explained that outings are undertaken with the children to the local library. Prior to any outing a risk assessment is carried out and the staff members explained the procedure in line with the services outings policy.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On the day of inspection, the emergency exit door to the rear of the premises was chained. This poses a risk to the safety of staff and children in the event of emergency evacuation of the service.
2. On the day of inspection, a climbing frame recently purchased for the children was propped against a railing in the outdoor area. While it is acknowledged that the registered provider removed this equipment when brought to their attention during the inspection, this equipment must be secured to a wall as in its current position poses a risk to the health and safety of the children given its weight.

Infection Control:

3. On the day of inspection, a fridge was not available to store lunch boxes that included perishable food items in line with safe food guidance. This poses a risk of contamination for children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has now removed the lock and chain from the rear exit door which allows for staff and children to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

The climbing frame has been removed from the outdoor area. In the future any new equipment will be installed correctly and safely prior to use by the children.

Infection Control:

A fridge has been purchased and installed in the service and children now put lunches in labelled boxes into the fridge on arrival each day.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of the lock removed from the rear exit door has been submitted.

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence of the fridge in situ has been provided.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address these non-compliances. These actions will be assessed on 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) A person trained in first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. All staff hold current FAR certification.

(2)(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available and safely stored on the premises.

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 fire drills was available with the last recorded fire drill documented as having been carried out on 24 February 2025.

(b)

Firefighting equipment records were available demonstrating that these were last serviced in February 2025.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous places within the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(b) There was no current record of the maintenance of the fire detection system in the premises on the day of inspection. This was also non-compliant on the last inspection and the preventive actions submitted previously have not satisfactorily ensured compliance here.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The fire detection system has now been serviced and a current certificate obtained. The next annual service due in November 2025 has been scheduled and the registered provider will ensure that a copy of the service certificate is made available on the day of the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the service certificate for the fire detection system has been submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action as stated by the registered provider has been deemed to address the non-compliance. This action will be assessed on the next inspection.

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 a valid certificate of insurance which expires on 19 March 2026 for Part-time Daycare with Afterschool which covers a maximum of 22 children attending sessional and part-time care in addition to a maximum of 20 children in afterschool care.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, the inspectors observed aspects of the outdoor area of the service that may impact the health and safety of the staff and children as follows:

1. Some false ceiling panels had become warped, were loose and at risk of falling.
2. A covered ceiling light had filled with water that had turned brown. While it is acknowledged that the registered provider informed the inspectors that the lights do not work, this poses a risk to the safety of staff and children attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The ceiling panel and ceiling lights have now been removed. In the week commencing 30th June to July 4th a new ceiling will be fitted in this area with appropriate lighting.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence has been submitted, demonstrating that the above corrective action has occurred.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action as stated by the registered provider has been deemed to address the non-compliance. This action will be assessed on the next inspection.