

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX080
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Name of Service:	Little Oaks Academy
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Address of Service:	Oakwood Estate, Ramstown, Gorey, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y25 NY88
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Name of Registered Provider:	Paula Driver
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection Day 1:	14/05/2025
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Day 2:	15/05/2025
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No of pre-school children Day 1:	AM	68	PM	61
No of pre-school children Day 2:		61		NA

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford
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Inspection undertaken by:	C. Ryan
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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 Academy is a privately operated preschool service which opened in 2010. It offers a play-based curriculum to children aged between 0 and 6 years. The service operates from 07:30 to 18:30 and is open Monday to Friday. The service operates from a purpose-built childcare facility in a residential estate in Gorey town and consists of six playrooms, two sleep rooms, sanitary accommodation, a kitchenette and office space. A garden to the rear of the premises provides an outdoor play area for the children.

Staffing

The service employs 21 staff. The registered provider and manager work daily in the service and assist across the rooms as needed. The service is also staffed by a chef and an administrator, who do not work directly with the children.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment,

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels,

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play,

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 25 – First Aid,

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures,

Regulation 28 – Insurance and

Regulation 29- Premises.

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 wishes 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

(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)

On the first day of inspection the manager was the designated person in charge of the service. There was a second named staff member available to deputise as needed. The registered provider arrived at the service shortly after the commencement of the inspection. On the second day, the registered provider was the designated person in charge.

The files for five staff, including three new staff working in the service, were reviewed on the day.

(2)(a)(b)

There were validated references for the five employees kept in each staff member's file.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff working in the service. The service also demonstrated partial compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every 3 years. See regulation 23.

(d)
Police vetting disclosures were available on file for staff who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months as an adult.

(4)
There were certificates of qualification for four staff members working directly with the preschool children available on file.

Non-Compliance Information

(4)
There was no evidence to demonstrate that one staff member was qualified.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Evidence of qualification is now on file.

The service will ensure evidence of qualifications are on file in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of proof of qualification.

Summary Comment

The requirement of the regulation is met.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

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

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

Compliance Information

(1)(2)

During the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the service with the exception of the finding below. On day 1 of the inspection during the morning there were 12 staff members caring for 68 children. During the afternoon there were 11 staff caring for 61 children.

On day 2 of the inspection, 12 staff members cared for 61 children. On both days, the registered provider, the manager and an additional staff member were available for support if required.

Non-Compliance Information

In the log cabin adult to child ratios were not fully maintained after the ECCE session was finished. Between 12:20 and 12:55 there was one staff member with 11 children present. Based on the number and ages of the children, two adults were required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff ratios will be maintained at all times. A plan will be put into place when cover is not available, such as to relocate children into other rooms that are within ratio for the short period or reschedule lunches to ensure all rooms are within ratios.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
- (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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Materials and equipment were available on low level shelving in all the playrooms. Children were observed to access the materials independently. The tables and chairs provided in the service were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children in each of the care rooms. Younger children had low wooden feeding chairs with trays suitable to their age.

Sufficient materials were available and in reach for children. Additional resources and equipment were also available on higher level shelving and in cupboards. The children's daily routine was displayed in the rooms. The play equipment and materials were observed to be durable and easy to clean. There were birthday walls, photographs of children's families and artwork displayed in the rooms demonstrating a sense of identity and belonging for the children.

Outside to the rear of the premises, children had access to an enclosed garden. The area was divided into different areas. There were covered areas directly off four of the playrooms. Outside there was a playhouse, a climbing frame, swings and sensory pathways. Children in all the rooms spent time outside, with children from some rooms going outside twice during the day. A large tree provided the space with natural shade.

(b)

Each of the playrooms had cosy quiet corners set up for children to sit in, rest or relax. The areas were developed to suit the different ages and stages of development of the children using them. In the baby and wobbler room the area consisted of mats and cushions. In the junior room the area consisted of two small armchairs and books. There were two sleep rooms in the service, each with standard cots.

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 leading into the service was appropriately secured with a buzzer system to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. The outdoor garden was located to the rear of the premises and was fully enclosed. The kitchen and storage facilities for hazardous cleaning materials were restricted to children.

A sample of 10 accident and incident reports reviewed on inspection demonstrated compliance with the service policy.

Infection Control:

There was warm water, liquid soap, and paper towels available to facilitate hygienic handwashing for both staff and children. Good hand washing practices were observed in the wobbler room, log cabin, toddler room and ECCE room.

Administration of Medication:

Seven administration of medication records were reviewed on inspection. There was evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of medication and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document any medication given. Staff adequately detailed the procedures for administering medication if required during discussions with the inspector. Staff showed the inspector a detailed care plan which was in place for a child who required monitoring and administration of daily medication.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were familiar with safe sleep guidance, and they placed the younger children on their backs to sleep. Sleep logs were maintained in the sleep rooms and individual children's observations recorded the room temperature, breathing, colour and position every 10 minutes. These were logged on an app and shared with parents. Standard cots were provided for children under two years to sleep.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every 3 years. There were Garda vetting disclosures on file for all staff members, however the vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the previous 3 years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda vetting.
2. The windowsill in the baby outdoor area had two exposed nails which posed as puncture risk to staff and children.
3. A number of staff involved in nappy changing were observed to have long, pointed and painted nails and wore bracelets which posed as an injury risk to children's skin. This is at variance with the services dress code policy.

Infection Control:

A number of inconsistencies in practice were observed and at variance with the service's infection control policy:

1. The door to the toilet on the corridor was left propped open on both days. This posed as a risk of cross infection.
2. Cot mattresses examined did not have waterproof covers and therefore posed as a risk of cross contamination.
3. Children in the baby room were not observed to have their hands washed after nappy changing which is not in line with the service's nappy changing policy.
4. Children in the junior Montessori room did not have their hands washed before eating their afternoon snack on day two.
5. Children in the junior Montessori room had their faces cleaned with one communal cloth after their dinner on day one. This posed an increased risk of the spread of infection.
6. The sleep mats in the Montessori room were beginning to fray at the edges and therefore the service could not ensure they can be adequately cleaned.
7. The lobby area of the toilet in the ECCE room was used for the storage of toys and equipment. Items were stored unboxed on open shelves. This poses as a risk of cross contamination.

Safe Sleep:

1. Young children in the baby room were placed to sleep on mats on the floor which was at variance with the service's sleep policy. Staff in discussion with the inspector advised that sleep plans were not in place with parents for children who may have been developmentally ready to sleep outside of a cot on a sleep bed.

- The sleep mats used for the children were unsuitable and not in line with the Safe Sleep Guidance for Children under 24 months.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was applied for straight away and is now on file. List of Garda vetting renewal dates created on a calendar on our office PC with renewals reminders.
- The nails were removed immediately.
- A staff meeting was held to discuss and address long nails & jewellery in the workplace. Staff were asked to shorten their nails immediately and to not wear jewellery in the workplace. Special accommodation will be given to those wearing an anxiety or a diabetic bracelet.

Infection Control:

- Discussed at staff meeting – all staff are aware the door needs to remain closed.
- All cots have mattress protector sheets and are changed daily.
- Hand washing was discussed at staff meeting.
- Hand washing was discussed at staff meeting.
- Infection control policy discussed with all educators at staff meeting and about the usage of face cloths.

Safe Sleep:

- New floor beds with mattresses were sourced immediately for under two years.
- Safe sleep plans have been documented for the under two's who are currently sleeping on floor beds.

Supporting documentation submitted

Garda vetting. Sleep plans. Photograph of new sleep bed. Photograph sign to remind staff to close bathroom door. Mattresses covers.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response to address the non-compliances. This regulation will be reviewed on 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)
There were 12 staff trained in FAR (first aid responder) available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2)(a)(b)
There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position available for use.

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 firefighting 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)(b)
A record was maintained when the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm system were serviced in February 2025.

(4)
There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Fire drills were not completed monthly. Through discussion with four staff, it was established that fire drills are completed every three months and not monthly as recorded and outlined in the service's fire safety policy.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

A fire drill was completed on the 20th of May. A discussion was held with all educators at staff meeting in May regarding the importance of monthly fire drills. A new fire officer was appointed and will ensure to carry out monthly fire drills and documentation of the fire drills.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of staff and children completing a fire drill.

Summary Comment

The requirement of the regulation is met.

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 for a full day care service for 76 children.

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

Compliance Information

(d)

The service had cleaning schedules that were completed daily.

(e)

There were sufficient number of nappy changing units and toilets for the number of children attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
- The following areas required maintenance:
1. The nappy changing area between the baby and wobbler room required painting as parts of the wall had peeling paint, were missing paint and therefore could not be adequately cleaned.
 2. The area around the window in the baby and wobbler nappy changing area was unpainted and dusty.
 3. The area around the window in the toddler nappy changing area was unpainted and therefore can't be adequately cleaned.
 4. The timber surrounds in the ECCE toilets required repainting as the paint had peeled off in parts.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All points on maintenance have been addressed with a maintenance person. The team are currently waiting for a works schedule date but aim to have everything completed end of September.

Monthly checks will be carried out and a schedule for any maintenance works.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.