

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX080		
Name of Service:	Little Oaks Academy		
Address of Service:	Oakwood Estate, Ramstown, Gorey, Co. Wexford		
Eircode:	Y25 NY88		
Name of Registered Provider:	Paula Driver		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	25/09/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM 52
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspector Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford		
Inspection undertaken by:	C. Ryan L. McGarry		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
Authority to Inspect			
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).			
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable		

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 7.30am to 6.30pm 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 to work in the service. The registered provider and manager work daily in the service and assists across the rooms as needed. All the staff working directly with children in the service held the minimum of level 5 and above qualifications in Childcare and Early Childhood Care and Education. There is a chef and an office administration staff also, 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 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4) Management and Recruitment,
Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing levels,

Regulation 20 Facilities for Rest Play

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

Regulation 25 First aid

Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures

Regulation 28 Insurance and

Regulation 29 Premises.

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

This inspection was triggered by receipt of information.

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,

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

On the day of the inspection there was a designated person in charge of the service. The registered provider was on the premises daily and assisted as needed throughout the rooms. The service had a second staff member who was the designated person in charge in the absence of the registered provider.

The staff files for 21 staff working directly with children were reviewed on the day.

(2)(a)(b)

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

- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures including re-vetting were available for all staff working in the service.
- (d)
Police vetting disclosures were available on file for the staff who had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.
- (4)
Certificates of qualifications for all staff members working directly with the preschool children were available on file.
- (7)(a)
Staff induction included making all new staff aware of the policies, procedures and statements of the service. Staff stated that they were supported within the service. The service held staff meetings throughout the year.

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)
On the day of inspection adequate numbers of staff were working directly with the children at all times.
- (2)
On the morning of the inspection, the staff to child ratios were maintained as follows throughout the service:
- In the baby room, there were 7 children being cared for by 2 staff. (4 aged 0 to 1 years and 3 aged 1 to 2 years)
 - In the Toddler room, there were 7 children being cared for by 2 staff. (all aged 1 to 2 years age).

- In the Wobbler room, there were 6 children being cared for by 2 staff. (2 aged 1 to 2 years and 4 aged 2 to 3 years).
- In the small ECCE room, there were 11 children being cared for by 2 staff. (10 aged 2 to 3 years and 1 aged 3 to 4 years).
- In the big ECCE room, there were 19 children all aged 3 to 5 years old being cared for by 2 staff.
- In the cabin, there were 12 children aged 3 to 5 years old being cared for by 2 staff.

During the afternoon of the inspection, the staff to child ratios were maintained as follows throughout the service:

- In the baby room, there were 6 children being cared for by 2 staff. (3 aged 0 to 1 years and 3 aged 1 to 2 years)
- In the Toddler room, there were 8 children being cared for by 2 staff. (all aged 1 to 2 years of age).
- In the Wobbler room, there were 5 children being cared for by 2 staff. (1 aged 1 to 2 years and 4 aged 2 to 3 years).
- In the small ECCE room, there were 11 children being cared for by 2 staff. (10 aged 2 to 3 years and 1 aged 3 to 4 years).
- In the big ECCE room, there were 15 children all aged 3 to 5 years old being cared for by 2 staff.
- In the cabin, there were 7 children aged 3 to 5 years old being cared for by 1 staff.

The registered provider, deputy person in charge, the chef and administrative staff were also on the premises. An additional staff was rostered to cover staff breaks.

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)

There was adequate space within the rooms for each child to play indoors and outdoors. The outdoor areas were spacious with a variety of spaces including a sensory garden, a playhouse, swings and a slide.

(1)(b)

There were two small sleep rooms with cots for younger children to sleep.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a lack of an enriched learning environment within the individual rooms. Interest areas were not resourced or fully developed to meet the play and learning needs of all children. The toddler room had a number of empty shelves, with toys out of reach of the children. The canopied area located off the big ECCE room was used for storage and cluttered which was not fully developed for as potential space for play off the playroom.

(1)(b)

The rest area in the big ECCE room was poorly developed and not conducive for children to rest. The wobbler room did not have a blind to darken the room for children while sleeping.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The new educators in the Wobbler room have engaged with the curiosity approach and have redesigned the room. Both educators have completed a course with the curiosity approach, and are waiting to engage with Better Start that will visit in November.

The ECCE room have added a sofa, pillows and blankets to their rest area.

Further training and support provided within the wobbler room

Daily/Weekly canopy checks to ensure all materials are stored correctly.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory to meet the requirements of the regulation.

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 to the premise was secured by an electronic magnetic door release. The outdoor garden is located to the rear of the premises and was fully enclosed. The wooden steps of the playhouse were safe and sturdy. Accident and incident reports reviewed were maintained consistently throughout the rooms and in line with the service policy. Attendance records were fully maintained throughout all rooms.

Infection Control:

There was warm water, liquid hand soap and hand towels available in the toilets for handwashing. Premade formula bottles were brought into the service prepared by parents and stored in the fridge till required.

Administration of Medication:

The service had a medication administration policy and records for recording of medication. Records reviewed indicated that staff were following the policy, records were correctly maintained, dated, signed and witnessed by staff and signed by parents.

Safe Sleep:

The service had a safe sleep policy. It has two small sleep rooms with cots for children under two. There were sleep floor mattresses in the rooms for older children. Staff were observed doing sleep checks every 10 minutes in line with safe sleep guidelines on young children. Staff remained in the rooms and monitored sleeping children who slept on the floor mattresses.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The changing mats were torn and posed as a risk of cross contamination as they could not be adequately cleaned.
2. The sleep mattresses were not adequately spaced apart in the wobbler room as in the line with good infection control measures.
3. Personal items and equipment were stored in the toilet in the wobbler room which posed as a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response to address the non-compliances:

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. New changing mats were bought.
2. Sleep mats are now positioned with adequate space between them and black out blind and curtains installed in wobbler room
3. Personal items removed from wobbler storage area.
4. All educators briefed individually about leaving adequate space between sleep mats.
5. Monthly visual checks on all changing mats and educators asked to communicate any rips/tears to management so they can be replaced.

All educators briefed at team meetings about having personal items in the classrooms. Each educator has their own cubby in reception for their personal belongings.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs submitted

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory to meet the requirements of the regulation.

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 staff trained in FAR first aid available to the children attending the preschool service.
- (2)(a)(b)
There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the premises and was available for use.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate that insurance was in place.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (b)
The entrance door was secured at all times on the day of inspection. The outdoor area was fully enclosed, with side gates locked. The premises is a purpose-built childcare facility.
- (c)
All the playrooms were lit and ventilated through openable windows. The rooms were warm and comfortable. Sleep rooms were warm and cooled by air conditioning units.

Non-Compliance Information

- (c)
The mechanical ventilation in the big ECCE room toilets did not appear to be working sufficiently well. There was a foul smell noted on the morning of the inspection.
- (d)
The premises needed some general maintenance and upkeep.
The toddler room required painting and cleaning, with paint missing from walls and skirting boards. Skirting boards and behind equipment were dirty.
The nappy changing area between the baby and toddler room required painting as parts of the wall were missing paint, therefore could not be adequately cleaned.
The acrylic canopy outside the toddler and small ECCE room required washing. There was a heavy build-up of grime, dirt, leaves and debris covering it. In the small grass garden off the baby room, there were a large number of worn and broken ride on toys. The grass was excessively mucky and not suitable for young children.
There were a number of storage sheds located outside, which were full to capacity with toys and equipment. Further boxes of excess toys and equipment were stored in the outdoor area and not in sheds and were exposed to the elements. Broken toys and parts of toys no longer in use were left on the roofs of the playhouses. Two reclining baby chairs appeared broken, the fabric was worn and torn, and they were unsuitable for use.

(e)

The nappy changing unit and toilet facilities used by the small ECCE room was not adequate for the changing of children who were toilet training. A staff was observed changing a child with the door open as the room was too small.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response to address the non-compliances:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) The mechanical ventilation in the big ECCE was checked by an electrician. The unit was hoovered, had a maintenance check and the filter was changed in the air purifying unit.

(d)

The toddler room has been painted (walls and skirting) since the inspection.

The nappy changing area between the baby and toddler will be painted the first weekend in November.

Work has been booked to replace all acrylic coverings in the canopy areas. The service has a large natural garden with eight large trees, mixture of oak and pine that hang directly over the canopy areas, due to it being autumn leaves and pines are naturally going to fall onto the canopy areas.

The team hope to combine this work with redesigning the baby/wobbler garden so that is useable in all weathers. Staff have started do a clear out of sheds and any broken toys/materials have been taken away. The two reclining baby chairs fabric covers have been replaced.

(e)

Educators have been asked to change any children that may have had an accident in the adjoining bathroom that has more space.

Team meetings to communicate timelines for the garden works. Team meeting to discuss the use of the bathrooms/changing areas.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted a response that was satisfactory to meet the requirements of the regulation.