

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018DR502
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Name of Service:	Wise Little Owls
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Address of Service:	1(Upstairs) Lower Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A94 CT88
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Name of Registered Provider:	David Owens
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	56	PM	28
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate - Tusla Child and Family Agency Brunel Building, Floor 7 Heuston South Quarter Dublin 8, D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	M Bermingham and O Quill
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).

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Description of service

Wise Little Owls is registered to provide part time and sessional care for up to 88 children aged 2-6 years. Operating hours are 08:00 – 13:00. The service operates from a purposely adapted premises on the first floor of a commercial unit. There are four children's rooms operating named the Red room 1 and 2, Blue room, and Green room. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is accessible on the upper floor.

Staffing

The service employs 11 staff including the deputy person in charge. On the day of inspection there were 10 staff working directly with children. The registered provider works in the service as the person in charge who along with the deputy also provided support and cover when required.

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.

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 -

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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, 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*
- (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.*

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(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 has a named person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The person in charge and/or the deputy were rostered to be present on the premises for the duration of the opening hours.
- (c) A clear management structure was in place as evidenced by observing the operation of the service and through discussion with staff.

(2)

There were 11 adults employed by the service, of which 2 commenced employment since the last inspection on 13 October 2023, as determined through a review of previous inspection information, the current roster and discussion with the registered provider. Relevant documentation was reviewed for these two adults and renewals of Garda vetting disclosures was reviewed for existing adults, with the following details found:

- (a) Two written and verified references from past employers where available.
- (b) Two written and verified references from sources other than past employers were available.
- (c) Two Garda vetting disclosures were available. Renewals of Garda vetting disclosures were available, in accordance with the Inspectorate's regulatory notice requiring renewal every three years for all adults employed.
- (d) One international police vetting certificate was available for one adult who lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months as an adult.

(3)

The procedures specified in regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) above were completed prior to two adults commencing in the service as evidenced through a review of documentation.

(4)

Qualification records were reviewed for two staff working directly with children and the two staff were found to hold the required qualification.

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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 at all times during the inspection. There were 10 staff caring for 56 children in the morning and 4 staff caring for 28 children in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times as evidenced through observation and review of the roster.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) The following observations demonstrated how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service and how appropriate and suitable care practices were in place:

The children ate a morning snack at 10:00 that was provided by parents and included healthy items such as sandwiches, crackers, yoghurt, cheese, and fruit. The registered provider reported that children eat a second snack at 12:00, also provided by parents and that additional food is made available to children if required. The atmosphere was calm and relaxed as adults sat among children engaging in social chat and children were facilitated to eat at their own pace. Drinking water was accessible to children in individual beakers at snack time and throughout the inspection. Children were supported to use the toilet independently and put on their coats for going outside. Aprons were provided for children who engaged in messy play.

Children's play and activities appeared child led and children's choices were honoured and supported by the adults. Children were engaged and engrossed in activities and play both indoors and outdoors. Adults supported children's learning and development through providing materials and resources, using open ended questions, and using language that reflected current learning topics. Adults and children engaged in rhymes, songs, stories and action games together. Children's voices and laughter were heard as they participated in play and activities with their peers and with the adults.

The environment was laid out in designated interest areas to include Montessori work, an imaginary corner with play props, a messy area with paint and sand, an art area with paper and mark making materials. Books were provided in area with a bench for children to sit on. The learning areas were well resourced with materials and equipment laid out in an inviting arrangement on low open shelving. Children freely chose resources and were engaged in a variety of activities to include colouring, completing puzzles, playing with animals and sand, and

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painting. They also worked with construction and Montessori materials. The displays in the environment were image and print rich and included learning topics on nature, letters, numbers, children's artwork and children's birthdays. When outdoors, children were engaged in singing and running games with the adults. Outdoor play equipment included climbing frames, a playhouse and a planting area with a children's sized bench.

Adults interacted and supported children in a kind and respectful manner. The daily routine was displayed, and adults guided children through transitions that ran smoothly where children appeared familiar and content. Adults enabled children's independence by assigning helpers to jobs and encouraging children to tidy items away after use. Adults supported children to resolve minor conflicts and promoted sharing of materials.

Relationships around children and their sense of identity and belonging was fostered through ongoing connections with families. Staff chatted with children about children's family members, trips and recent celebrations. There were pictures of families displayed. Staff reported that information about a child's day is exchanged with parents using a digital app alongside daily conversation and that they are available for meetings if required. The service also communicates additional information about the service by email.

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 following measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children, and provide a safe environment, as evidenced by observation of practice, a review of the environment and documentation, and through discussion with staff:

General Safety:

- The outdoor area was fully enclosed.
- There were restrictors on windows to prevent children exiting or falling.
- Toys and play equipment were in good condition.
- Small fruit in children's lunchboxes was chopped to mitigate the risk of choking.

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Infection Control:

- The premises, environment, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in a hygienic condition. Tables were cleaned in advance of the children eating.
- Effective handwashing was supported through the provision of warm running water and liquid soap.
- The children were supported to wash their hands after using the toilet, before eating, and after being outside.
- Children's lunchboxes containing perishable items were stored in the fridge.
- Waste was managed through the use of foot pedal bins.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated through discussion that they were familiar with the procedures and practices for the safe administration and recording of medication.
- Prior parent consent was recorded to administer medication, including in the case of an emergency.
- Medication was clearly labelled, within its expiry date, stored in the original container, and was stored out of reach of children.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency escape routes and exits were unobstructed and clearly signposted.
- Staff outlined the procedures to evacuate children in the event of a fire and knew the location of the assembly point, in line with the services' procedures that were displayed.

Non-Compliance Information

The service did not ensure that adequate measures as follows were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children, and provide a safe environment:

General Safety:

1. The entrance to the service was not appropriately secured. On the inspectors' arrival, at 09:25, two entrance doors were found propped open and unsecured. The unsecured entrance presented a significant safety risk, as it did not adequately prevent unauthorised persons from entering the service or children from leaving the premises unsupervised. It is acknowledged that the registered provider immediately addressed the issue on the inspectors' arrival by closing and securing the entrance door. The registered provider stated that the door had been left open temporarily to facilitate parents dropping off children.
2. A bottle of spray cleaning agent was on a fridge top that was accessible to children in Red room 2, posing a risk if ingested. It is acknowledged that staff moved the bottle to a high shelf immediately when the inspector brought it to their attention.

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- In the hallway that children accessed independently, a trailing flex lead from a screen attached to the wall down to a socket, posing a strangulation hazard.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that:

- The door latch was removed, and going forward the door will be kept open by a staff member only.
- It was communicated to all staff that cleaning spray bottles are to be kept out of children's reach.
- Electrical trunking was fitted to secure the trailing flex.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted by the registered provider and reviewed by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions stated by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliances identified under regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-
(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and
(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

- (1)
The registered provider ensured that a person trained as a first aid responder was available to children at all times, as evidenced through a review of the roster. A current certificate of first aid responder (FAR) training was available for three staff.
- (2)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available.
- (a) The first aid boxes were stored safely in conspicuous positions in the hallway and on high shelves in the children's rooms.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to children at all times.

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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) Fire drills were completed monthly and the last fire drill was recorded to have taken place on 30 April 2026, as evidenced through a review of written records and through discussions with staff and management.
 - (b) A record was available of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on the 13 June 2026, and smoke alarms were serviced on 5 March 2026, as evidenced through a review of records.
- (4)
Notices of the evacuation procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in conspicuous locations in the rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A valid certificate of insurance was displayed for 88 children with an expiry date of 17 April 2027.