

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH031
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Name of Service:	Little Oaks Early Years Limited
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Address of Service:	St Fursey's National School, Marlbog Road, Haggardstown, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Bogan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	15/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	40	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
Title:	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).

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Description of service

Little Oaks Early Years Limited is a privately owned service that has been in operation since June 2014. The service provides full-day care and education to pre-school children from 2 to 6 years of age. The service caters for a maximum of 44 pre-school children. This service operates from within a pre-fabricated structure which is located on the grounds of St. Furseys National school, Haggardstown, Co. Louth. The premises consist of 2 large playrooms, namely the Leaf Room and the Acorn Room, with adjoining sanitary accommodation, a kitchenette, and a storage area. The service has access to an enclosed outdoor play area to the front of the prefabricated building, and a small, grassed area is located to the rear of the premises. School-aged childcare is also provided.

Staffing

The registered provider and 8 childcare staff, two of whom are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) work directly with the pre-school children on a daily basis.

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.

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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 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 27 Supervision. However, on inspection, an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation in 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*
- (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.*

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

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge and the registered provider, and review of the staff roster, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, a designated person in charge or a named person in charge are on the premises.

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

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(2) The files for the registered provider and 8 staff were reviewed.

(a) (b) A total of 18 references was available on file as required.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and 8 staff. The registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice for 4 staff and the registered provider, which requires 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 8 available employment histories demonstrated that one adult had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that all staff employed to work with children 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (d) Following receipt of the employment record for one staff member, a review determined that police vetting was required for two countries. Police vetting was available for one country, and a basic disclosure was available for the second country; however, the requirement for that country is an International Child Protection Certificate.

(3) From review of documentary evidence, it was determined that one staff member had commenced working in the service before the required international police vetting was obtained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (d) and (3)

The staff member had one form of an international police certificate on file. However, when it was brought to our attention that the requirements had changed. An International Child Protection Certificate was applied for by that staff member immediately after the inspection. A copy of the confirmation of application and subsequent completion certificate was sent to the inspector via email once it was received by our service.

We believed that the need for an international police certificate would be flagged during the Garda vetting procedure carried out by the Irish Garda Vetting Bureau. However, we now know this is not to be a part of the

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vetting procedure. Should any future employees disclose employment outside the state, we will request an International Police Certificate as part of their consideration for employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

A completed International Child Protection Certificate for one staff member.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9 (2) (d) and (3).

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:

- Three adults cared for 19 children aged 3 years 3 months to 4 years 6 months in the Acorn room.
- Four adults cared for 21 children aged 4 years 4 months to 5 years 2 months in the Leaf room.

In the afternoon, 14 children from both care rooms joined together in the Leaf room and were cared for by 3 adults.

In addition to the above, the service manager was office-based and available to cover in rooms if needed.

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The registered provider arrived shortly after the inspection began and was on site for part of the day.

(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:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a) An employment record for one staff member was not available on site; therefore, it could not be determined if police vetting was required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A CV for the staff member has now been printed and added to the physical file. CV's will be printed out and placed in a physical file for all future employees.

Supporting documentation submitted

CV for one staff member.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 16 (1) (a).

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.

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Compliance Information

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

Basic Needs

The children were observed to enjoy their morning snack and dinner in a relaxed and unhurried manner. The children were facilitated to take their time and were observed to engage in conversations with their peers and staff during snack and meal times. Breakfast cereals, dinner, which consisted of sausages, potatoes and red sauce on the day of inspection and an afternoon snack that varies daily are provided by the service. The children take in their own snack for morning time from home, which contained a variety of crackers, fruit, sandwiches, pancakes, and breadsticks.

The children were observed to use the toilet independently, with adults remaining close by for support if needed. Children who were not yet toilet-trained had their nappies changed in line with their individual personal needs.

Children's appearances were cared for through the promotion of children cleaning their own noses.

Cosy areas were provided in both care rooms for children to rest and relax during their day.

On the day of inspection, the children were observed to experience a change of environment to the front outdoor area, where they played with chalk, footballs, ride-on trucks and listened to music and danced with their friends and staff. The children, whilst in the outdoor areas, were dressed appropriately for the weather on the day of inspection.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival was warm and welcoming. The children in the Leaf room were taking part in circle time, and the children in the Acorn room were having their morning snack. Staff were quick to address any disagreements that occurred over turn-taking and were observed talking to the children down at their level, by working together to come to a solution of sharing toys and playing nicely with their friends. The children in the Acorn room were observed exploring their care room by playing in the home area, with connecting toys and foam stepping blocks. The children in the Leaf room were practising songs for their upcoming preschool graduation and enjoyed taking turns singing songs of their choice at the end of the preschool session. While in the outdoors, the staff were observed to be consistently engaged in play with the children, such as dancing to music, playing bear hunt games and drawing with chalk. Communication with parents/carers is in person at arrival and collection, with brief conversations at collection time observed on the day, when parents/carers arrive in to the service to collect the children from their preschool rooms.

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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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

The main gate and entrance doors were secured upon the inspector's arrival. The entrance doors remained locked when not in use during the inspection, ensuring no unauthorised person could enter the building or no child could leave the building unsupervised. The outdoor areas are surrounded by fencing with gates secured where required, to prevent a pre-school child gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger and to prevent unauthorised access to the external play area. Ground surfacing, both indoor and outdoor, was maintained in a good state of repair with no trip hazards observed. Storage areas were inaccessible to children. Cleaning products were stored safely out of the reach of children. Play equipment and resources were observed to be maintained in good condition. Risk assessments were completed up to date.

Infection Control:

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

Handwashing was observed to take place after the children used the toilet and before meal times. Warm water, hand soap, bins, and paper towels were available at each wash hand basin. The service was maintained in a clean manner. Cleaning schedules were in place and up to date. Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the service policy. Care rooms and sanitary areas are ventilated through means of openable windows. Tables were cleaned before and after meals. Snacks taken in from home are stored in the fridge until snack time. External waste bins were stored securely and were inaccessible to children.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In respect of 5 out of 9 staff members, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years, as a period in excess of 3 years had elapsed since their Garda vetting disclosures were issued.
2. One blind cord attachment had come loose from the wall in the Acorn room, and two blind cords were not secured within the safety catch in the Leaf room, which poses a risk of injury to a child.

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Infection Control:

- The bin used for storing soiled nappies was a swing-top bin, not a foot-operated, lined, lidded bin that is leak-proof and sealable in line with infection control requirements.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- Garda vetting renewals were in the process of being applied for on the day of the inspection. The vetting was enacted through Early Childhood Ireland. All outstanding Garda Vetting certificates were returned with this CAPA. A reminder has been scheduled on the company digital calendar to renew Garda vetting within the required timeframe. This will be done for all current and future staff.
- Blind cords secured to the wall. Retraining of staff on room risk assessment.

Infection Control:

- Bins being used in accordance with previous rules. Bins changed in accordance with new rules.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copies of five completed Garda vetting records. Photograph of blind cords secured.

Infection Control:

Photograph of new bins in place.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - 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.*

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Compliance Information

- (1) (a) A record of the monthly fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 27 March 2026.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 29 August 2025, and the smoke alarms were dated 14 April 2026.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls and doors 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 in both care rooms appropriately supervising the children in attendance. In both care rooms, staff members worked well together, ensuring that they were positioned to supervise the children within the care rooms. Similarly, in the outdoors, staff members positioned themselves well to ensure all children were in sight at all times.