

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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Date of Inspection:	20/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	61	PM	63
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford
Inspection undertaken by:	C. Ryan and 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).

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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 and Montessori 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 23 staff. The registered provider and manager work daily in the service and assist across the rooms as needed. All 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, cleaner, and an office administration staff 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 (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4),

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),

Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and development of the child,

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

Regulation 25 – First Aid,

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety and

Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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, 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)

The manager was the designated person in charge on the inspector's arrival to the premises. There was a second named staff member available to deputise as needed. The registered provider arrived at the premises shortly after.

The files for all staff working in the service were reviewed on the day including the student on placement.

(2)(a)(b)

There were validated references in each staff member's file.

(c)

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

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(d)

Police vetting disclosures were available of 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 the staff members working directly with the preschool children available on file.

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 were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

During the morning there were 13 staff caring for 61 children.

During the afternoon there were 11 staff caring for 63 children.

The registered provider and a student were also present on the premises.

The staff roster was displayed and included a rota for lunch cover.

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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

Compliance Information

1(a)

The following observations and discussions with staff reflected the children's experience within the service on the day of inspection:

The inspectors observed staff members across each of the rooms treating the children with respect and positive regard. They sat with children in small groups or individually, engaged in play, activities and conversations with the children. Staff in the baby room were observed to be kind and attentive to the babies in their care, and prompt in attending to babies cues for care. Staff who spoke to the inspector were familiar with their routines and specific care needs. Parents were encouraged to share their preferred routine for their babies with the staff. These notes from parents were available for staff to view in the care room.

The inspector observed staff communicating with parents and guardians during collection times, providing an opportunity to share information regarding their child's day. Additional methods of communication such as phone calls and the service's communication application were used to share information and pictures.

The playrooms were suitable, well laid out and homely for the children. Each of the rooms were individually resourced and designed to meet the needs and interests of the specific age group using them. Babies had free movement in the room and were observed crawling around the large baby room. A range of Montessori materials, toys and equipment, loose parts and sensory items were offered. Children's literacy development was promoted with the availability of books in each of the rooms. Kitchens, books, treasury baskets, art materials, small world, jigsaws, puzzles, blocks and a variety of sensory trays were available for use by the children.

Children's identity and belonging was fostered through the display of works of art and their recent learning.

Low-level open shelving units allowed children to freely access materials and toys, promoting independence and choice making.

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The service chef prepared the main hot meal of the day which consisted of chilli con carne and rice, with stew for the evening meal. Parents supplied mid-morning snacks for the children. Drinks were freely accessible to the children in each playroom throughout the day, drinks stations were on low level shelves. Meal were eaten in the individual rooms and were observed to be unhurried social experiences, staff and children set the table and sat with the children. Children were encouraged to feed themselves appropriate to their stage of development and were assisted as required.

Regular nappy changing took place throughout the day and staff were observed to engage attentively with children during the process. Children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently. Sleep was child led in the baby room and staff worked with parents to ensure consistency between home and service routines. Children were placed to sleep when signs of tiredness were recognised by staff, this was observed in the baby room when children were placed to sleep as required during the day. In the remaining rooms children were facilitated to sleep/rest after the dinner. The playrooms were set up with sleep mats and sleep beds and the rooms dimmed to promote sleep and rest. Staff remained in the rooms with the children while they slept.

All children enjoyed time outside during the day. After outdoor play, children changed out of their wellies and into slippers and indoor shoes before returning inside. The baby room had a door to the outside area which was open on the day of inspection allowing the babies to crawl outside on to the artificial grass in their outdoor area under the supervision of the staff who were looking after them.

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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 entrance door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.

Cleaning agents and medication were stored out of children's reach and storage facilities were inaccessible to children. The outdoor area was located to the rear of the premises and was fully enclosed.

Infection Control:

Playrooms and toilets all had warm water, liquid soap and hand paper towels. Children were observed being supervised with washing their hands before eating, after messy play and after toileting. Attention to children's personal hygiene was observed, with staff seen wiping runny noses and cleaning children's faces.

Staff ensured children's hands were washed after nappy changing. Nappy changing practice was observed, and staff followed the nappy changing policy and all required steps for infection control, including the use of gloves, aprons for each nappy change, and thorough handwashing after changes.

Foot operated pedal bins were available throughout the premises to ensure the hygienic disposal of waste materials. The premises, toilets, playrooms, equipment and materials appeared clean and were maintained in a hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

There was an administration of medication policy. Staff discussed with the inspectors the procedure to follow when a child required administration of medication. A sample of 10 medication forms were reviewed on the day and were completed in line with the service's policy.

Safe Sleep:

Staff members were observed to physically check and record the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children every 10 minutes in line with good safe sleep practices.

Cots were used for younger children to sleep in and sleep beds were available for older children.

Appropriate bed linen was in use for sleeping children. Staff were observed to remain in the room with children who slept on sleep beds and record sleep checks.

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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 five people trained in a first aid responder (FAR) course immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position on the premises which were available to the children attending the service.

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)(a)

Fire drills were completed monthly. The last fire drill completed was recorded on the 17 April 2026.

(b)

A record was maintained when the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm system were serviced in February 2026.

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(4)

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had a valid certificate of insurance for full day care for 76 children.