

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC229
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Name of Service:	Little Learner's Childcare
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Address of Service:	College Manor, Cobh, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P24 FH56
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Name of Registered Provider:	Brenda Barrett, Catriona Leahy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	80	PM	47
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurranaברה, Cork T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast & M Burke
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 Learner's Childcare is a play based, full day care service, that also provides part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks annually. Daily opening hours are from 7.30am to 6.00pm and the service is open 50 weeks of the year. A registered school age service is also in operation.

The childcare facility is located in a residential area of Cobh, in Co Cork. It is provided from the ground floor of an apartment complex and consists of four care rooms, with either adjoining or adjacent sanitary facilities, along with a designated sleep room, an office and a staff room/kitchen. The children have the use of an outdoor play space onsite.

Staffing

At present, there are 27 adults employed at the service; 21 work directly with the early years children and 3 work solely with school age children. The registered providers are not involved in the direct day to day care of the early years children and the manager/deputy is also office based. In addition, four students were undertaking work placements at the time of the inspection.

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

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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.

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 providers, manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN1884	13/05/2026	On review of the recruitment records, it was noted that Garda vetting was not available for two adults, who were present on the day of inspection and had access to the children.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions, which were accepted by the Inspectorate.	

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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.
- (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) Both registered providers were in charge of operating the early years service. Two named deputies were also assigned to the setting.
 - (b) The registered provider and one of the deputies were on duty at the service when the inspectors arrived. The staff roster indicated that one of the registered providers or a deputy was on duty at all times, during the hours of operation.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider, it was determined that five adults had commenced working at the setting, since

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the previous inspection. Two of these staff members worked directly with early years children. Four students were also present on work placement programmes. A total of nine files were reviewed.

- (a) Of the 18 required written and validated references, five were from a past employer.
 - (b) Thirteen of the references were from sources other than previous employers and had been validated.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were on file for six adults. Although not required, Garda vetting had also been obtained in respect of a student, who was under the age of 18. Garda vetting for an additional two staff had been renewed, in line with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting records, with certified translations, were available on file for two of the adults.
- (4) Records demonstrated that the two adults who worked directly with the early years children had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(d) See statutory notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN1884 served.
- (3) As per part (2)(d), Garda vetting had not been obtained before these adults commenced their roles at the childcare facility.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (3) The written reply outlined that the students in question were informed that they would no longer be able to attend for their placement at the service. Going forward, it will be ensured Garda Vetting is in place for students. No student will be permitted to commence work experience, without the required Garda Vetting in place.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement submitted is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The response received is accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements

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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) It was observed that there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance.
- (2) The adult child ratio met the requirements of the regulation.
- There were 80 children present across the 4 care rooms during the morning, with an age range of 1 to 5 years. Fourteen adults were working directly with these children.
 - In the afternoon, 10 adults were responsible for the direct care and education of 47 children, aged 1 to 5 years. Four students were not included in the adult child ratios.
- (8)
- (a) There were at least two adults present in the service, during the hours of operation. This was observed in practice at the time of inspection and was further demonstrated through review of the staff roster.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider advised that there were 101 children enrolled at the setting. Of the 101 corresponding child records, a sample of 11 were reviewed and met the requirements from (a) to (i).

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*

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Programme of activities:

- The service followed a play based, emergent curriculum.
- The daily routine was observed to include both child led and structured activities. For example, during free play, the children were noted to engage in imaginary play, tabletop activities and to explore the outdoor area, while adult led activities included action songs and reading stories.
- Throughout the morning and afternoon, language development was promoted through singing, storytelling and regular conversation between the adults and the children. On one such occasion, the children in Room 2 were provided with an opportunity to look back on and chat about their experiences at pre-school, through exploring their individual learning journals. These journals reflected the children's themed learning, artwork and included a variety of photographs, all of which prompted discussion.
- Staff members advised the inspectors that informal conversation with the children and observation of their interests, were used to inform short term curriculum themes and activities. For example, in Room 3, the life cycle of a frog was currently being explored and the children who attended Room 4 had been focusing on self-care skills. A long term plan was also presented for review and was noted to cover a range of topics, from sports and transport to animals and seasonal events.
- Recently explored themes were visible on the care room walls, with a selection of the children's artwork displayed. In Room 4, a list of helpful phrases in various languages was displayed, which promoted inclusion and supportive communication.

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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 risk of unauthorised access and that of a child exiting the service unsupervised, were adequately controlled; the entrance door was maintained secure when not in use and the outdoor play environment was fully enclosed by fencing and a secured gate.
- Glass panelling at child height was fitted with visibility strips, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a collision injury.
- Cords from window blinds were secured with suitable tension devices.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.

Infection control:

- Wash hand basins were suitably equipped with liquid soap, paper towel dispensers and foot pedal operated bins.
- Handwashing was noted to be carried out by the children after using the toilet and after having their nappies changed.
- During an observed nappy changing procedure, the following practices reduced the risk of cross infection:
 - The adult wore single use gloves and an apron, which were removed and disposed of immediately after the nappy change.
 - Both the child and the adult washed their hands, once the nappy changing procedure was completed.
- Within the nappy changing area adjoining Room 4, the children's toiletries were individually stored.
- Children's coats and bags were maintained on wall hooks, above floor level.
- The stackable beds and floor beds in the sleep room appeared well spaced apart, which minimised the risk of cross infection.
- A suitable covering was provided for the outdoor sand pit when this area was not in use.

Administration of medication:

- Prescribed medication was found to be stored out of the children's reach, had been labelled and was in-date.

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- A sample review of the temperature reducing medication held onsite, was also found to adhere to this practice.

Safe sleep:

- Written sleep logs were maintained and presented for review. Said records reflected 10-minute interval checks in relation to the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children.

Fire safety:

- The service's fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.
- Illuminated fire exit signage was in place.
- Firefighting equipment was secured.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) Review of the staff roster demonstrated that an adult with First Aid Response (FAR) training was available to the children at all times during the hours of operation; five staff members held up to date certification.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate cover was in place for the full day care service and the policy was valid until 27 March 2027.

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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) A sample of the cleaning records displayed in the care rooms were reviewed and were noted to have been completed to date. During discussion, the registered provider advised that regular safety audits were carried out at the setting and that damaged equipment was either disposed of or reported as requiring repair. Evidence of this practice was visible, as damaged items which had been removed from the care rooms were stored in the main office. In addition, a record of the safety audit for the month of April was available and included checks of the various areas within the service.