Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report
Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC229

Name of Service:	Little Learners Childcare

Address of Service:	College Manor, Cobh, Co. Cork

Eircode:	P24 FH56

Name of Registered Provider:	Catriona Leahy , Brenda Barrett

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection:	25/07/2023

No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	25

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
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).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable

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Description of service

Little Learners Childcare is a play based, full day care service, that also provides part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate children aged one to six 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 form the ground floor of an apartment complex and consists of four care rooms, with either adjoining or adjacent sanitary facilities, an office and a staff room/kitchen. Since the previous inspection on 22 August 2022, a designated sleep room has been added beside Room 4. An outdoor play environment is accessible alongside the premises.

Staffing

There are currently 24 adults employed at the service; 19 work directly with the early years children and a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education has been attained by each of these adults. A further three adults work with school age children only. The registered providers are not involved in the direct care of the children. A student was also undertaking work experience at the time of 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

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of the child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspections 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered providers, deputy 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) The registered providers were in charge of overseeing the operation of the service. Two deputies has also been identified, to deputise as needed. Written information to this effect was displayed in the office.

(b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the deputy was on duty at the childcare setting. One of the registered providers arrived within 10 minutes and the second registered provider attended later in the morning. Both remained to facilitate the inspection process. Review of the staff roster indicated that one of the registered providers or deputies were consistently on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2) The registered provider confirmed that two adults had commenced working at the service since the previous inspection was undertaken on 22 August 2022. Therefore, recruitment records in relation to these two adults were reviewed, along with those of two additional adults, whose files had not been assessed previously and a

student, who was undertaking an internship.

(a) Of the 10 required written and validated references, one was on file from a past employer.

(b) There were eight written and validated references from sources other than previous employers.

(c) Five Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available.

(d) Police vetting documentation was in place for one of the adults, who required same.

(4) Records demonstrated that one of the adults had achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications. A Letter of Qualification Recognition had been obtained in respect of a second adult. A qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education was not required for two of the adults, who worked with school age children only, or for the student.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(b) One of the written and validated references was not accepted, as it did not meet the criteria in relation to the definition of a 'reputable source'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A new reference was supplied and validated. A reference will only be accepted in future if it meets the criteria in relation to the definition of a reputable source.

Supporting documentation submitted

An updated reference and corresponding record of validation were received.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered providers has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 9.

Part III – Management and Staff
Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service
A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.
Compliance Information
The following policies were reviewed and deemed satisfactory: • Healthy Eating policy • Outings policy

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) The registered providers ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times. (2) The required adult to child ratios were adhered to as follows: Morning:

Time	Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
9.42am	Room 3 (2 – 4 years)	20	4
9.44am	Room 4 (14 months to 2 ½ years)	14	5

Room 1 was occupied by 12 school age children, with two adults present and 17 school age children, under the supervision of 2 adults, attended Room 2.

Afternoon:

Time	Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
1.43pm	Room 3 (2 – 4 years)	17	3
1.47pm	Room 4 (16 months to 2 ½ years)	8	4

In the afternoon, Room 1 was in use to accommodate 15 school aged children, with two adults and there were also 15 school age children in Room 2, with 2 adults present.

(8)

(a) Review of the staff roster indicated that the service was operated with at least two adults present 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:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

Compliance Information

(i) Detailed weekly staff rosters were displayed in the main office.

(j) The administration of the daily medication required by one of the children, was comprehensively recorded and parental consent for staff to administer said medication was in place.

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)

Basic needs:

- Healthy eating was promoted at the setting and frequent meals and snacks were accommodated. The registered provider advised that breakfast was typically facilitated from the time children began arriving at 7.30am, until 9.00am, the mid-morning snack was observed at 10.15am, lunch was observed in Room 4 and Room 3 at 11.50am and 12.15pm respectively and it was reported that the afternoon snack break usually took place at 3.00pm.
- At mealtimes, bibs were provided for the younger children as required. Staff members sat with and chatted to the children, as they ensured appropriate assistance. This helped to create an unhurried environment, while the children enjoyed their food.
- Drinking water was available to the children if they required additional fluids between meal and snack breaks; in Room 3, the children's drinks were accessible on trays on top of the fridge and in Room 4, water bottles were stored in a container on the sink. The inspector was advised that the younger children were offered their drinks at various intervals.
- It was noted that nappy changing was facilitated regularly throughout the day and was sensitively managed by the adults. As the sanitary facilities for the older children were located separately to the care room, their access to this area was supervised by the adults, who supported the children by offering verbal prompts and reminders.
- As the children in Room 4 transitioned to a scheduled rest period in the afternoon, the adults were attentive, kind and patient as they supported the children to relax and prepare for sleep. A calm atmosphere was evident and all of the children chose to rest at this time.
- The children's cues and care needs were promptly attended to. For example, when one of the children who attended Room 4 was upset on arrival at the service, they were immediately reassured by one of the adults, who spoke in a kind and playful tone.

- Within the care rooms, adequate space was available for children to freely explore their chosen activities. The outdoor area was also well utilised, with outdoor play and games facilitated for all of the children on the day of inspection.

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- *(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)(b) • A new sleep room was directly accessible from Room 4, to cater for children aged under two years. This was furnished with six standard cots and appropriately fitting mattresses. An air conditioning unit was in place to ensure that the air temperature was maintained between 16^{0}C and 20^{0}C, as recommended for safe sleep. A second air conditioning unit had been installed in Room 4, which was used to facilitate a scheduled rest period, as part of the daily routine. • Stackable beds and linen were provided for children aged over two years. • Rest areas, which consisted of vinyl cushions or beans bags, positioned next to a selection of books, were available in both care rooms.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service
Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials
A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- On the day of inspection, the early years children were accommodated in Room 3 and Room 4. Both care rooms were bright, warm and inviting, with suitably sized tables and chairs in good supply and play resources within easy reach for the children.
- In Room 3, examples of the materials on offer included a well-stocked play kitchen, a dress up rail, dolls houses, a tool bench and play tools, hand held vehicles, animal figures, building blocks and books.
- Room 4 catered for the younger children and was appropriately equipped with interest items such as a colourful wall mounted busy board, soft toys, vanity mirrors and accessories, activity chairs, a play kitchen, musical instruments, hand held vehicles and a selection of sensory play materials, which included play dough, shredded paper, dry pasta, ribbon and felt.
- The outdoor play environment consisted of both tarmacadam and bark chipping surfaces and was partitioned into two areas. On one side, there were bright ground markings, which included a hopscotch game and traffic lights. This area was equipped with ride on toys, a seesaw, fence mounted chalkboards and a basketball hoop. The adjoining space featured a large sand pit, a garden area with insect information displays, tyres, bench seating and a mud kitchen.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service
Regulation 22 – Food and drink
A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.
Compliance Information

- Most of the meals consumed on the premises were supplied by the children's parents or guardians, with breakfast cereals available in the service.
- At the time of inspection, the children's mid-morning snacks included a variety of nutritious options, such as sandwiches, buttered bagels, crackers, rice cakes, yogurts and a selection of fruit, with water to drink.
- At lunch time, the children's hot meals included roast beef and vegetables, spaghetti bolognaise, chicken with potatoes and vegetables and pasta with vegetables. Children who attended part time hours had a second meal break at this time, with snacks such as crackers, cheese, sandwiches and yogurts provided.
- The inspector was advised that some of the children had specific dietary requirements and allergies. This information was detailed on an *Allergies List*, which was clearly displayed in each of the care rooms and contained the relevant information in relation to all children across the service. The registered provider further advised that said allergens were not included as ingredients when carrying out food-based activities with the children.

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 fridge in Room 4 was fitted with a restrictive opening device, which prevented the children from accessing the items within.
- The available firefighting equipment was securely wall mounted.
- The window blind cord in Room 4 was anchored through the use of a tension device.
- Visibility strips were in place on low level glass door panels.

Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins were supplied with liquid soap and well-stocked paper towel dispensers. Foot pedal operated bins were also provided for the hygienic disposal of used paper towels and nappies.
- The children who attended Room 3 were noted to wash their hands before the mid-morning snack.
- The following hygienic practices were observed during a nappy changing procedure in Room 4:
  - The adult wore a single use apron and disposable gloves, which were removed and disposed of once the nappy change was complete.
  - The child was assisted to wash their hands after their nappy was changed and the adult also washed their hands.
  - The nappy changing mat was sanitised after use.
- Overall, the service presented in a clean and hygienic manner. Examined cleaning records for the outdoor play area were maintained up to date and a staff member was observed to sanitise the wash hand basins in the shared sanitary facility, after use by the children.
- Wall hook storage was in place for the children's bags and coats. In the nappy changing areas, there was labelled storage for the children's toiletries and spare clothing was maintained in zip locked bags.
- Open windows in Room 3 ensured a regular supply of fresh air.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered at the time of inspection. However, the daily medication required for one of the children was suitably stored out of the children's reach and was in-date.
- Previous administration of said medication had been appropriately recorded.

Safe Sleep:

- The air temperature of the designated sleep room and that of Room 4, while it was in use for sleep, both fell within the required range of 16^0C to 20^0C. A temperature reading of 19.9^0C was taken in the sleep room, while occupied by sleeping children and the air temperature of Room 4 was recorded at 19.6^0C, during the designated rest period.
- Handwritten sleep logs were presented for review and were noted to include frequent 10-minute interval physical checks of the children's position, colour and breathing. On discussion, staff also demonstrated familiarity with the required sleep checks.

Outings:

- The inspector was advised that outings were undertaken. A suitable Outings policy was in place and was noted to include an outings risk assessment form.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Elevated water temperatures were recorded at the two wash hand basins in the sanitary facility adjoining Room 4, which posed as a scalding risk. Temperature readings of 47.6^{0}C and 48.4^{0}C were noted. This was also found at the previous inspection on 22 August 2022 and while the issue had been rectified at the wash hand basins in the larger, shared sanitary facility, it remained unresolved in the Room 4 sanitary area. It is acknowledged that this issue was addressed during the inspection, after it had been established that the wash hand basins in the Room 4 sanitary area were connected to a different hot water supply and the thermostat was lowered. Subsequent water temperature readings of 27.3^{0}C and 38.7^{0}C were recorded.

Infection Control:

2. Some of the available sanitary facilities were not utilised as allocated by the signage in place, which increased the risk of cross infection. While the service had a sufficient number of sanitary facilities overall, there was excess use of one of the staff sanitary facilities; the staff toilet located adjacent to the kitchen/staff room was used by up to 16 adults, while the second staff sanitary facility, which was labelled accordingly, was being used by the school age children, who attended Room 1. One toilet and one wash hand basin are required for every eight adults. This issue was also found at the previous inspection. The CAPA response at the time stated that all staff had been made aware of which sanitary facility is allocated to their care room and that all sanitary facilities would be labelled to reflect which rooms they are to be used by. Although the sanitary facilities were noted to be labelled, this was not reflected in practice and Room 1 was not included among the labels in place.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

<u>Corrective & Preventive Action</u>

General Safety:

1. A separate thermostat controls the water temperature in Room 4, this was lowered and the water temperature issue was rectified. The thermostat will remain set at a lower temperature.

Infection Control:

2. All staff have been informed of which sanitary facilities are allocated to their care room. The sanitary facility located near Room 1 is now used for staff only and children from Room 1 are using the toilet block. Sanitary facility usage will remain labelled and all staff will be informed of their usage during their induction training.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. As the issue was addressed at the time of inspection, the statement from the registered providers is accepted as evidence.

Infection Control:

2. A photograph to demonstrate that the sanitary facility near Room 1 is labelled for staff use.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under this regulation have been adequately addressed.

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) The monthly fire drills which had been conducted at the service were documented and available for review. Said record indicated that the most recent fire drill had been undertaken on 23 June 2023.

(b) A list of the number and type of the available firefighting equipment was on file. Records from fire safety companies demonstrated that the firefighting equipment and the wired smoke alarm were respectively serviced on 8 November 2022 and 14 April 2023.

(4) Fire evacuation notices were displayed in the care rooms.

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*
Compliance Information
(b) The risk of unauthorised access and that of a child exiting the service while unsupervised, were adequately controlled; the inner door of the premises, which provided access to the childcare facility, was maintained secure when not in use. The outdoor play environment was fully enclosed by fencing and a secured gate.
Non-Compliance Information
(c) There was no means of ventilation in the new sleep room.
Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider
Corrective and Preventive Action (c) A vent has now been installed in the sleep room to allow for ventilation. The vent will be kept clear of obstruction to allow appropriate ventilation of the room. **Supporting documentation submitted** (a) (c) A photograph of the new vent in the sleep room.
Summary Comment
The response from the registered providers was accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.