

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN041
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Little Stars Play School and After School
-------------------------	---

Address of Service:	31 Bellamont View, Cootehill, Co. Cavan
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	H16 Y310
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Rachel McCabe
-------------------------------------	---------------

Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

Date of Inspection:	16/01/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	-
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	---

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).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Little Stars Play-school and After School is a non-profit community-based childcare facility. The service is located in Cootehill town. The service is registered to provide part-time and sessional care to 54 pre-school children aged 2 to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.30am to 12.30pm. There is one large care room in operation that covers the majority of the ground floor of the premises. There is a kitchen located on the ground floor, an office and two extra care rooms on the first floor that are not currently in use by the preschool children. An outdoor area is located at the rear of the premises. A school-aged service is also provided.

Staffing

There are seven staff employed in the service, including one manager, one deputy, three childcare staff, one of whom is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). One school-aged staff member and one admin person are also employed. The registered provider is not involved in the day-to-day running of the service.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 16 Record in relation to Pre-school Service, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures, Regulation 27 Supervision 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, 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 service had a designated person in charge, who is the service manager, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, the designated person in charge or the named person in charge was on the premises.

(2) The files for 7 staff were reviewed, and documents available as follows;

(a) (b)

A total of 6 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

A total of 6 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

One written reference from a previous employer was available on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 7 staff. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 7 employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for 7 staff demonstrated that six staff had not lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months; therefore, police vetting was not required for the 6 staff.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that all 7 staff employed held a 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) (a) (b)

The registered provider had not carried out the validation process for one reference on file for one staff member. There was no second reference available for one staff member.

(d)

Following review of the staff employment records, it was determined that one adult had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the one staff member was not available on file.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) (b) I have validated the reference for the staff member since inspection. I have asked and obtained a second reference for the staff member. All staff files are now up to date. I will ensure that any new staff members will provide 2 references and they are validated before they start their employment as per the recruitment and selection policy.

(d) Police Vetting has been obtained for the staff member that has lived outside of Ireland for more than 6 months and recruitment and selection policy was updated. On recruitment as staff member that has lived outside of Ireland for more than 6 months over the age of 18 years, will be required to provide police vetting from that country as per recruitment and selection policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of validated references and recruitment policy submitted.

Summary Comment

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

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 when the service was operating at maximum attendance.

Three adults cared for 13 children aged 2 years 5 months to 3 years 8 months of whom all attended on a sessional care basis.

In addition to the above, the manager arrived in the afternoon as per the daily roster.

(8) A review of the staff attendance records 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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(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;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(16)

(1) A record in writing was kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) Details of attendance of each pre-school child who attends the service.

(i) Details of a weekly staff roster were available, and records were completed detailing staff working hours daily.

(j) Records of any medication administered to a child while attending the service, accompanied by parental consent.

(k) Records demonstrating the details of any accident, injury or incident that occurred to a pre-school child while in attendance.

(3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to inspection on the premises by the inspector.

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

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

Basic Needs

A rolling snack time was in place in the preschool. The snack area with a table, chairs, a fridge, and the children's drinks was opened during 10.30 to 11.30am. Snacks taken in from home included sandwiches, yogurts, bread rolls, rice cakes and fruit. The staff advised that, where some children may not actively seek their snack, they would encourage them to have something to eat during their time in preschool. The children's drink bottles were accessible to them at all times. The children were observed to use the toilet independently and were seen to call on staff where supports were needed. A rest area, including a soft child-sized sofa, was available for children to rest during their time in preschool. The children experienced a change of environment to the outdoor area after the rolling snack time was finished and before home time, and the children were dressed appropriately for the weather on the day.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival was warm and welcoming. The children were engaged in play activities and came to say hello to the inspector and offered to make her some "tea and toast" in the play kitchen. The children appeared content and familiar with the staff who cared for them. Discussions between staff and children about the children's home life occurred during the session, which demonstrates strong links to the children's personal lives. The staff used gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings and were observed to promote positive behaviour with comments such as "gentle hands" used. The staff were observed to demonstrate sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families, through

respecting parental wishes while also meeting the children's individual preferences and choices. Methods of communication to families is in person at arrival and collection times.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor rooms were spacious and laid out to suit the needs and interests of the children in attendance. Designated interest areas were set up to include a home corner, dress up materials, rest area, books, table top sections, small world toys, sensory play to include playdough and water play, and a painting area. The play materials and equipment were freely available and accessible to children on low-level shelves and in boxes. The outdoor area is spacious, pleasant and safe, and laid out into three separate areas divided by wooden fencing for various types of play. Artificial grass provided a surface for year-round use. One area had wooden balance beams and a wooden bridge, the second area had a playhouse and mud kitchen, and the third, larger area had wall-mounted chalkboards and mirrors. Ride-on toys were taken out of the garden storage unit for play in this area on the day of inspection.

Programme of Activities

Evidence of an emerging curriculum was noted in the preschool, and a key worker system was in place. Participation was child-led, where children chose what area to play in or what toys to play with, for example the play-dough area was set up with play-dough rollers and cutters and the children were facilitated to incorporate other toys, such as little people, into their play. A family wall, birthday chart and many creative artworks by the children were displayed on the walls in the preschool. The children's creative pieces linked into recent curriculum planning, which incorporated new year's celebrations and animals in winter weather.

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 was secured upon the inspector's arrival. The entrance doors remained locked at all times during the inspection, ensuring no unauthorised person could enter the building or no child could leave the building unsupervised. The outdoor area was surrounded by wooden fencing with gates, which were secured. A visitor log was maintained, and the inspector was requested to sign in and out. Ground surfacing, both indoor and outdoor, was maintained in a good state of repair with no trip hazards observed. Stairways and steps were well-maintained. 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 daily. Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection

Infection Control:

Handwashing was observed to take place after the children used the toilet and before snack time. Thermostatically controlled warm water, hand soap, pedal-operated bins, and paper towels were available at each wash hand basin. The care rooms and sanitary areas were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic manner. Cleaning schedules were in place, up to date and completed by staff. The Preschool room and sanitary areas are ventilated through means of openable windows and trickle vents. Children's snacks taken in from home contained perishable items and were stored in a fridge within the preschool room. External waste bins were stored in an area not accessible to the children.

Administration of Medication:

Medication records reviewed contained prior parental consent to administer the medication, the name of the medication given to the child, dosage, time administered, two staff signatures and a parent's signature. Staff advised that no medication had been administered since preschool reopened for the 2025 to 2026 term, which corresponded with the records reviewed, where the most recent record completed was dated in 2024.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Upon the inspector's arrival, a smell of fumes was noted within the service and in particular the kitchen area where an internal oil burner was present. This could impact the health and well-being of the staff and children within the service.

Administration of Medication

2. A display outlined that two preschool children were recorded as having an allergy or a specific medical condition. The staff verbally outlined to the inspector the children's allergy/condition. However, no care plans were completed and signed by the children's parents to include signs, symptoms and procedures for what staff should do in the case of a reaction and or emergency.

Fire Safety:

3. The smoke alarm and fire extinguishers were last serviced in August and April 2023, and not annually, which is required by the fire safety in preschool guidelines to ensure that appropriate firefighting equipment and smoke detection are available in the event of a fire.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The oil burner has been serviced by a plumber and certified safe, and a new CO2 detector was fitted. The oil burner will be serviced yearly to ensure its safety to be used.

Administration of Medication:

2. The children who are currently enrolled with known allergies have been given a care plan in partnership with their parents, and it has been displayed in the kitchen area for all staff to see. The administration of medicine and admission policies have been reviewed to include that care plans are created for all children with allergies or medical conditions prior to them starting the service.

Fire Safety:

3. The smoke alarm, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers have been serviced since the inspection. Everything is working as it should. We will have this equipment serviced yearly to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Invoice evidence of boiler serviced and a new co2 detector in place.

Administration of Medication:

Photo evidence of care plans, updated administration of medication, and admissions policy.

Fire Safety:

Invoice evidence of smoke alarm and fire extinguishers serviced.

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 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 who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Five staff members held in-date FAR training certificates, four of whom were rostered to work on the day of the inspection.

(2) (a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available on the premises and was stored in an accessible and conspicuous location out of the reach of children.

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) A record of the fire drills which were carried out monthly was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 08 January 2026.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 31 August 2023, and the smoke alarms were dated 07 April 2023.

(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 appropriately supervising the children in attendance. The staff members worked well together, ensuring that they were positioned adequately to supervise all the children in the indoor care room, and while in the outdoors, ensuring all children were in sight at all times.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 30 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis. Records reviewed demonstrated that the service only provides sessional care to preschool children at present, and a maximum of 19 children are enrolled in the 2025 to 2026 academic year. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.