

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015DR158 |
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| Name of Service: | Little Apples Academy |
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| Address of Service: | 2 Carbury Place, Main Street, Blackrock, Co. Dublin |
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| Eircode: | A94 W889 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Gemma Holohan |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 25/08/2025 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 27 | PM | 25 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Floor 7, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Kilmainham, D08X01F |
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| Inspection undertaken by: | R Phillips O Quill |
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| Title: | Early Years Inspectors |
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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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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable |
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Description of service

Little Apples Academy is located in an urban area of Blackrock, South Co. Dublin. The service provides full day, part-time, and sessional care and education to children aged between two and six years. Little Apples currently operates from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 18:00 hours from a three-storey period Georgian building which has been purposely adapted for use as an early years' service. The service consists of four preschool care rooms, two of which were closed to preschool children on the day of inspection and provide care to school aged children. An enclosed outdoor play area is available to the rear of the premises

Staffing

The service employs ten adults in total, including the registered provider and joint co-owner, who were both present in the service on the day of inspection. The centre has a manager and deputy manager who also work directly with the children and employs six more childcare practitioners five of whom were working with the preschool children on the day 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 child, and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9 (1) (2) (4) Management and recruitment,

11 (1) (2) (8) Staffing levels,
16 (1)(h)(i)(j)(k) Records of a preschool service,
19 (1)(a) Health, welfare and development of child,
23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,
25 (1) (2) First Aid, and
26 (1)(a)(b) (2) (c) (4) Fire safety measures

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16(1) (h)(j)(k). Samples of attendance records, accident and incident forms and medication administration forms were reviewed.

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, co-owner, 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 person in charge and a named person to deputise.
 - (b) The service manager and deputy person in charge were on the premises during the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or a person who could deputise to be present at all times of opening.
 - (c) The service had a clearly documented management structure with staff roles outlined. Adults demonstrated an understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the lines of authority within the service.

(2) Documentation was reviewed in respect of all staff employed to care for the preschool children since the last inspection on 12 June 2024 and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b)

References had been sourced from past employers and reputable sources for the three staff whose files were reviewed as required.

(c) Garda Vetting had been sourced for all adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for ten adults employed.

(d) Records of police vetting were available for two staff who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for six months or more as an adult.

(4) A record was available evidencing that two of the adults working directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

There was evidence that the registered provider did not ensure that all staff were suitable and competent prior to employment as outlined:

(2)(a) (b) There was only one reference available for one adult. A second reference was not available.

This regulation was non-compliant on inspection on 12/06/2024. The corrective and preventive actions submitted following that inspection have not prevented the reoccurrence of the noncompliance under regulation 9 (2)(a) and (b).

(2)(d) The registered provider had not sourced police vetting for one adult who has lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for six months or more as an adult as required. They did source a record of police vetting for one adult, on the day of inspection, however it could not be verified as it was not translated. This regulation was non-compliant on inspection on 12/06/2024. The corrective and preventive actions submitted following that inspection have not prevented the reoccurrence of the noncompliance under regulation 9 (2)(d).

(3) There was no written evidence that references had been validated prior to the start date for one staff member. All required records were not available as detailed under regulation 9(2)(a)(b) and 9(4).

This regulation was non-compliant on inspection on 12/06/2024. The corrective and preventive actions submitted following that inspection have not prevented the reoccurrence of the noncompliance under regulation 9 (3).

(4) The registered provider did not ensure that one adult employed to work directly with the children in the service held 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. This regulation was non-compliant on inspection on 12/06/2024. The corrective and preventive actions submitted following that inspection have not prevented the reoccurrence of the noncompliance under regulation 9 (4).

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

2(a)(b) References with evidence of validation were submitted to the early years inspectorate.

The service's procedures have been reviewed and strengthened to ensure that all staff members have the required references and validation of those references prior to their start date at Little Apples Academy.

2(d) The required police vetting for the staff member who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for six months or more has now been sourced and verified. The document has been officially translated into English and is on file for future reference.

(3) All references have been validated and there is written evidence of it. In the future we will maintain written records to confirm that all staff members have the required references, and they have been checked and validated prior to their start at Little Apples Academy.

(4) Qualifications were provided the next day after the inspection. We understand that we were not able to provide the qualifications during the inspection. However, we revised the qualifications during the hiring process and had the opportunity to check that qualifications were in line with the National Qualifications Framework.

We will ensure that all documents required are available for each staff member at Little Apples. Documents will be updated when applicable.

Supporting documentation submitted

2(a)(b) References with evidence of validation were submitted to the early years inspectorate.

(d) International police vetting was submitted in respect of one adult employed by the service.

4 Evidence of a recognised Early Years qualification was translated and submitted

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted was reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and was deemed to address the non-compliance.

Regulation 9(2)(3) and (4) will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. There were five adults working directly with a maximum of 27 pre-school children on the day of inspection. The person in charge and deputy person in charge were also available to relieve staff to change nappies or accompany the children to the bathroom where necessary.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement for the age of children and type of service provided was always maintained.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff members on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for a minimum of two staff to be on the premises at all times of opening.

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, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(h)

Details of the attendance of each child in the service were recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service.

(i)

The staff roster was available on the day of inspection and reflected the adults working in the service on that day.

(j)

A sample of ten medication administration records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

(k)

A sample of nine accident and incidents records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

(3) The records were made available as required for inspection.

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

Basic Needs:

The service had a healthy eating policy, and food and snacks were provided at regular intervals.

Drinking water was visible and accessible to the children in beakers and their own water bottles on low level shelving.

The staff encouraged the children to use the toilet independently and supervised them by sight and sound as necessary. Nappy changing was handled in a responsive way, with staff speaking to children with kindness and respect.

Spare clothes were available for a change if required, the inspector observed staff dealing with an accident in a sensitive manner, protecting the child's dignity.

The children's needs for sleep were met, with a scheduled sleep time, but staff stated that children would be facilitated to sleep as required.

It was warm and sunny on the day of inspection, staff were observed encouraging the children to drink, and suncream was applied, and time was limited playing in the direct sunshine.

The staff managed the transitions from indoor to outdoor play and to mealtimes and sleep time well, letting the children know what to expect.

Supporting Relationships:

One child who was settling into the service had a visit that the staff instigated from their older sibling. The child was more relaxed after the interaction.

The staff were observed speaking kindly to the children throughout the inspection, and sat with them during meals and classroom activities, promoting a relaxed atmosphere.

Family walls were visible making a connection between the setting and home, promoting a sense of belonging.

Physical and Material Environment:

There was ample play materials and arts and crafts available to the children on low level shelving in each room sampled.

Fine motor development was promoted with a variety of tabletop activities, Montessori toys and puzzles.

The secure outdoor area had grass covering most of the playground, with gross motor development supported by the children running during games with the staff, and imaginary interactive play and conversation was facilitated by the wooden bus structure in the garden.

Programme of Activities:

The daily routine was displayed in pre-Montessori on the wall, with accompanying pictures.

The environment facilitated choice of activities and children's language development was supported through social conversation and storytelling, as observed by the inspectors.

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

The inspectors found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff and inspection of the premises that the registered provider had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

The entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.

All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.

All blind cords were secured.

Thermostatically controlled warm water was available which did not exceed 43°C.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing.

Staff were observed to wash their hands in line with the infection control policy.

Children were observed to wash their hands at appropriate times to prevent the spread of infection or cross contamination, after outdoor play, using the toilet, nappy changing and before eating.

Children's nappies were changed in line with the service's nappy changing policy to reduce the risk of the spread of infection.

Individual bed linen was provided for the children in the pre-montessori room. Staff stated that all bed linen is laundered weekly or as required.

Administration of Medication:

Staff demonstrated, through discussion, that they were familiar with the procedures and practices in place for the administration of emergency medication in line with the service policy on medication administration.

A care plan was in place for one child with the pertinent information as required.

Emergency medication for one child was stored in line with the service policy on medication administration.

Safe Sleep:

Children in the pre-Montessori room were physically monitored while sleeping and sleep checks were documented every ten minutes.

An adult remained in the room at all times when children were sleeping

Fire Safety:

All emergency exits were kept clear of obstruction.

Fire procedures notices displayed clearly throughout the service.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that they do not bring the preschool children on outings.

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

(2)(a) The first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location in the kitchen within the service.

(b) The first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) Discussion with staff and review of staff files highlighted that someone with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was not available at all times that the service is operating.

The roster showed that no staff with FAR certification was going to be available between 17:00 -18:00hrs on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service acknowledge the non-compliance and have revised the staff roster to ensure full FAR coverage during all operating hours. At the time of the inspection there was no FAR trained person from 17:00-18:00. The manager, who is FAR trained is now covering this hour.

To ensure full compliance moving forward we have arranged for additional staff to undertake FAR training to provide adequate cover during staff absences or roster changes.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of payment for staff to do First Aid Responder training was submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider and evidence submitted have been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and have been deemed to address the non-compliance.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(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 service maintained a record of monthly fire drills that had taken place in the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on 25 July 2025.
- (b) The last maintenance check for the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms was recorded as having taken place on the 15 May 2025, 1 September 2025 respectively.
- (2)(c) The records were made available for inspection.
- (4) Notices of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in conspicuous places throughout the service.