

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS126
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Name of Service:	The Little Childrens Centre.
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Address of Service:	St. Annes Primary School, Kilcarrig Avenue, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin.
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Name of Registered Provider:	Valerie Pilkington
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	46	PM	21
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Early O'Brien & M. Condon
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).

Conditions if applicable	NA
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Description of service

The Little Children’s Centre is registered to provide full day care, part-time and a sessional service to pre-school children aged from 0-6 years. The service is privately owned and operates Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00. The early years’ service is located in former classrooms of St. Anne’s Primary School in Tallaght, Dublin 24. The premises was adapted to provide a childcare facility. There are four pre-school rooms in the setting named wobbler, toddler, junior preschool and ECCE. An outdoor area is provided for the children to the rear of the building.

Staffing

Nineteen staff are employed in the service including the registered provider, a chef, a kitchen assistant, a receptionist and a caretaker. The registered provider does not work directly with the children. On the day of inspection, the deputy person in charge was in charge of the service. The registered provider arrived at the service following the inspectors’ arrival. On the day of inspection there were fourteen adults working directly with the children. One of these adults was employed through the community employment scheme and two of these were on a student placement.

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, records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(4) - Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 (1)(3)(8) - Staffing levels

Regulation 15 (1) – Record in relation to a pre-school child

Regulation 16 (1)(h)(i)(j)(k) - Record in relation to pre-school service

Regulation 19 (1)(a) - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 - First aid

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record in relation to a pre-school child and Regulation 16 - Record in relation to pre-school service.

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, 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,

(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 provider is the designated person in charge of the service and there is a named person appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The deputy person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived at 10:30 on the morning of the inspection. The registered provider arrived following the inspectors' arrival at 11:10 and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

The files of nineteen adults were reviewed as part of the inspection. This included 7 staff members who had joined the service since the last inspection on 24 January 2024.

Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b) Fourteen written and validated references were available for seven adults.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all nineteen adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for two staff members who had lived outside of the State for a period of more than six months as an adult.

(4)

Records were available demonstrating that all adults employed in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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 at all times during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full-day care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were forty six children being supervised by fourteen adults on the morning of inspection and twenty one children being supervised by five adults in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

There was a minimum of two adults on the premises at all times during the inspection.

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)(a)-(j)

Twelve children’s records were sampled and reviewed. The records detailed the information which was required.

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..*

Compliance Information

(1)

The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the information listed above (1)(h)-(k) in relation to the service.

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,*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs

Healthy eating was promoted in the service and staff reported that all meals are provided by the service.

On the day of inspection, the children were observed to be eating a dinner of chicken, broccoli, potatoes and gravy. Staff advised that alternatives were available and food preferences catered for. Parents provided premade bottles for children attending the Baby room and these were stored in the fridge as required. Drinking water was accessible to children throughout the day and all children were given water with their dinner. Younger children were provided with bibs for dinnertime. Children were encouraged to feed themselves and staff supported

younger children who needed assistance with their dinner. Children appeared happy and content within each of the care rooms.

Children's care needs were observed to be met promptly. Staff were observed cleaning children's noses as required and children's hands and faces were cleaned after dinner. Children's nappies were changed regularly, and staff were observed engaging warmly with children when providing this care. Children were encouraged and supported to be independent including cleaning up after their play and meals.

There was a designated nap time in the Wobbler room. Stackable beds are available for sleep time for children attending the Toddler room as required.

Supporting Relationships

Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff interacted warmly with the children throughout the inspection and were observed supporting children in their play. Staff were observed to use encouragement, gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children's independence during play and mealtimes.

Staff described how they record information about each child's day detailing information on food, sleep and nappy changes. Children's learning is documented in learning journals which is shared with parents in June.

Physical and Material Environment

Care rooms were arranged to provide a range of play materials and areas of interest providing children with the freedom to play and explore. Areas of interest included small world toys, construction toys, jigsaws, rest areas with books, home corners and dress up areas. The care rooms provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and were adequately resourced with a variety of materials. Family photos, birthday displays, visual routines and children's artwork were displayed in the care rooms.

The environment was laid out to support the children's independence. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care rooms.

A fully enclosed outdoor play area was located to the rear of the premises and had a cushioned surface. The play area was resourced with a range of developmentally appropriate play equipment such as a climbing frame, slide, sand-tray, construction blocks, balance bikes and loose parts.

Programme of Activities

Children were observed to make choices on their own play materials within the environment.

Positive language was observed to be used across the staff team and with the children. Language development was supported in discussions observed both at snack time and in the outdoor areas where the adults encouraged the children to use words to describe their thoughts and feelings.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

1. On the day of inspection at dinner time at 12:10 in the toddler room, two children expressed a desire for more food but there was no additional food available.
2. In the wobbler and toddler rooms there was no rest area available for children to take a break from activities or to rest.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The staff have been advised to use the phone in the care room to request extra helpings, and the cook has been advised to leave extra food in the care rooms in the event of children looking for second helpings.
2. A rest area has now been created in both the wobbler and toddler rooms

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of couches and cushions in place to create a rest area.

Summary Comment

The inspectorate has deemed that the actions submitted adequately address the non-compliance. In relation to food available at dinner time, as this is a practice issue, it will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Visitors to the premises were required to sign in on arrival to the premises.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.
- The registered provider had taken measures to ensure the indoor play environments were safe and free from hazards.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing.
- A system was in place for effective sterilisation of soothers and mouthed toys.
- Individual bed linen was provided for children. Staff stated that bed linen is laundered weekly.
- Cleaning schedules were available in all care rooms and the service appeared clean.
- Foot pedal bins were available throughout the service for the safe disposal of used hand towels and other waste products.
- Tables were observed by the inspectors to be cleaned before and after snack time.

Administration of Medication:

- There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of anti-febrile medication and prescribed medication and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required.
- Staff adequately detailed the procedures for administering medication if required during discussions with the inspectors.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were physically monitored while sleeping and sleep checks were documented every ten minutes. Discussion with staff demonstrated that staff were familiar with safe sleep guidelines. Documented sleep checks were reviewed for the previous week. All were completed, in date and staff signature included.

Fire Safety:

- On the day of inspection, all emergency exits were observed to be clearly identifiable and were not obstructed.

Outing:

- The registered provider explained that an end of year outing is undertaken with the children. Staff reported that prior to any outing, a risk assessment is carried out. It was evident through discussion that the staff members were familiar with the services outings policy.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

On inspection of the service, the following were found to be a risk to the safety of the children:

1. Cleaning products were accessible to the children as follows:
 - In the sanitary area off the ECCE room, they were stored on a low shelf.
 - In the Wobbler room they were placed on the nappy changing unit.
2. A tall press in the ECCE room was unlocked. This poses a safety issue as the materials were stacked and children could access this press which posed a potential hazard.
3. Anti-febrile medication was unsuitably stored in each child's labelled box in the sanitary area of the care rooms. This is not in line with the services own policy on administration of medication which states that medicines will be stored in a refrigerator or medicine cabinet.

Infection Control:

4. Leather couches in both the ECCE and Junior ECCE room were observed to be ripped. This poses a risk of infection as they cannot be adequately cleaned.
5. There were no aprons available for nappy changing in the ECCE room where one child required their nappy to be changed. This poses a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has stated that

1. Staff have been reminded that all cleaning products must be stored out of the reach of children. (ECCE and Wobbler Rooms. Management will check in with staff to make sure that all cleaning products are stored out of reach of children.
2. A new lock was fitted to the long press in the ECCE room and staff have been reminded to make sure the press always remains locked to prevent any unnecessary accidents occurring. Management will ensure that the press in the ECCE room always remains locked securely when not in use.
3. All anti-febrile medication has been moved to a high press and a lock is fitted on the door. Management will ensure that all anti-febrile medication is stored in a locked cabinet and kept out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

4. All damaged couches and seating have been removed from both rooms to prevent the risk of infection. New couches will be ordered for the new term in September. A purchase order will be forwarded.
5. Aprons have been moved into the changing area where staff can access them when nappies are being changed. Management will ensure that the ECCE room has a supply of aprons in the changing room.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence submitted to demonstrate corrective actions.

Infection Control:

Invoice submitted for purchase of couches and cushions for care rooms and that those observed to be damaged on the day of inspection have been removed and replaced.

Photographic evidence of storage of aprons in nappy changing area.

Summary Comment

The inspectorate has deemed that the actions submitted adequately address the non-compliances.

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)
A person trained in first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff members hold current FAR certification.

(2)(a)(b)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children were available and safely stored on the premises

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 a valid certificate of insurance which expires on 27 March 2026 for a full-day care service which covers a maximum of 70 children.