

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY120				
Name of Service:	Little Learners ABCD				
Address of Service:	40 Lower Drumcondra Rd, Dublin 9.				
Eircode:	D09 V5R9				
Name of Registered Provider:	Nessa McNamara				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	9/7/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>77</td> <td>PM</td> <td>60</td> </tr> </table>	AM	77	PM	60
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	<p>Early Years inspectorate 2n Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park. Ballycoolin, Dublin 15. D15CF9K.</p>				
Inspection undertaken by:	C Kerrigan and L Jameson.				
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

Not applicable.

Description of service

Little Learners ABCD is a privately owned, full daycare service located in the urban area of Dublin 9. Little Learners ABCD is one of three services operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to provide full, part-time and sessional early childhood care and education to a maximum of 209 children aged 2 to 6 years old.

The service operates Monday to Friday from 7:45am to 6pm. The service operates an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) sessional programme from 9am to 12:30pm and is also registered to provide school age services.

Little Learners ABCD operates across the ground floor of a multi-use commercial building and also operates from prefabricated buildings on the grounds of this commercial premises. The service has 9 care rooms, each providing care to children in the 2-to-6-year age range. The sanitary facilities are located off each of the care rooms with further sanitary facilities available for staff. A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the premises. On the day of the inspection. The sessional care service was closed, and only four rooms were in operation. These were: Seomra Caislean, Seomra Rince, Seomra Geal and Seomra Driocht.

Staffing

There are currently 40 staff employed by the service, this includes the registered provider, the person in charge, two deputy persons in charge and 33 childcare staff who work directly with the children, three administration staff. The registered provider and the person in charge are supernumerary and manage the oversight of the service, the deputy persons in charge are available to provide support in the care rooms.

On the day of inspection, the two deputy persons in charge facilitated the inspection, 23 childcare staff were present working directly with the children. The person in charge arrived at 11:14am to also support the inspection.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess

compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 Record of Preschool Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of the child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms Seomra Geal, Seomra Rince, Seomra Dríocht and Seomra Casilean.

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.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued under Regulation 23 to the person in charge on the day of inspection in relating to a non-compliance identified under Regulation 23. A written response was received on the 10th of July 2025 mitigating the significant risk. Further details are available in the body of this report under Regulation 23.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, deputy persons 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.*

(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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise if required.
- (b) A review of the roster and conversation with staff on the day showed the named person in charge is rostered to be on the premises at all times during the service opening hours.
- (2)
- A review of paperwork and conversation with management showed that thirteen new staff have commenced employment in the service since the last inspection on the 20 August 2024. The files of all thirteen staff were reviewed. The Garda vetting disclosures of one existing staff member whose Garda vetting was required to be renewed since the last inspection was also reviewed.
- (a) The registered provider ensured that twenty-one written and validated references were available from a previous employer for the adults working within the service.
- (b) The registered provider ensured that there were five written and validated references available from a source other than a previous employer for the adults working within the service.
- (c) The registered provider ensured that Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the fourteen adults who in their role have access to children. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate notice requiring serves to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available for twelve adults who had resided in a country other than Ireland for a period longer than six consecutive months.
- (3)
- All references and Garda vetting procedures were completed prior to the thirteen adults being allowed access or contact with a child attending the preschool service.
- (4)
- The thirteen adults who work directly with children whose records were reviewed held a major award at level 5 or higher in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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 provider ensured an adequate number of adults were working with the children in the service at all times throughout the day. Twenty- three early years staff were available in the building to meet the care needs of seventy- seven children who were present on the day of inspection.

(2)
The registered provider ensured that the adult child ratios were maintained within the service on the day of inspection.

(8)(a)
The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times during the operational hours of the service. This was evidenced in the roster.

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;*
- (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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)
The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept for each child attending the pre-school service. The written records of ten children were reviewed and found to be fully completed, they contained the following information.

- (a) The registered provider ensure that the name and date of birth was completed in each child's record.
- (b) The registered provider ensures that the date on which a child first attended the service was recorded.
- (d) The registered provider ensured that the name, address and telephone number of the parent or guardian along with an emergency contact person for whom could also be contacted was recorded in the child's file.
- (e) The registered provider ensures that an authorised person for the collection of each child was recorded.
- (f) The registered provider insured the details of any illness. Disability. Allergy or special needs of the child relevant to their care within the service was recorded.

- (g) The registered provider. In short, the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was recorded.
- (h) The registered provider ensured that a record of vaccines was kept.
- (i) The registered provider ensured that written consent was present for children needing appropriate medical treatment in the event of an emergency.
- (3)
- (c) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was available for inspection and 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

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The registered provider ensured that child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service, for example:

Basic Needs

- The children were provided with regular lunch and snacks throughout their time in the service. Lunch and snacks were prepared at home and brought into the service. On the morning of the inspection, children were observed to have a selection of sandwiches, fruits, pasta's, crackers, yoghurts and cheese. Later, a hot lunch was provided to the children which was prepared on the day in the service. Alternative food options were available. Children's individual water bottles containing water were freely available to each child throughout their time in the service. Mealtimes were observed to be a social and pleasurable experience for the children at a pace that best suited their needs.
- In the care rooms sampled toileting was undertaken on a scheduled basis and as needed, children were observed have unrestricted access to the toilet with staff supervising and providing supportive cues in a child centre manner has needed.

- On the day of inspection staff demonstrated the use of positive child centred behavioural strategies such as observation, distraction and clear instructions on what was acceptable to support children's positive behaviours. For example: during a group activity a child was observed to repeatedly interrupt, time was taken by the adult to explain turn taking and redirected back into the engaging activity.
- Independence and a sense of responsibility was fostered towards children in the service, children were observed to self-serve food, under the supervision of staff, assisting with clean up when required.
- Quieter rest areas were available in each care room sampled.

Supporting Relationships

- The adults in the service were observed to interact with the children in a responsive, warm and respectful manner. Children were observed to feel confident and comfort in the service declining when asked to partake in activities and to freely ask questions during activities.
- Adults were observed to speak to each other in respectful and warm manner, working well together to respond quickly to children's cues.
- The adults in the service reported that information such as toileting, food and sleep is shared with parents daily through conversations at drop off and collection.

Physical and Material environment.

- The furniture provided in the room was low level and appropriate for the children attending with equipment and play materials easily accessible and visible to the children on low level units which nurtured independence and facilitated choice.
- There was a range of equipment available to suit the developmental needs of each age group. These included sensory trays, mark making home corners with associated props to facilitate imaginative play experiences, stacking, building, connecting and threading, toys to facilitate creative play, cars and tracks for transporting, and books to facilitate language and early literacy development.
- All children had access to an outdoor play environment throughout the day. This was scheduled but also available to the children if and when they needed. The large outdoor area had hills and tunnels, slides, climbing frames, balance toys and potted trees, giving an array of options to develop gross motor skills. A covered outdoor area was also in use with a shop and house to allow for the quieter play options.

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 main entrance to the service was secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival at the service. Access was granted via doorbell system in which a staff member answered, therefore preventing access to the children from unauthorised persons. This also prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- The care rooms opened into corridors which were accessed via a coded keypad. Preventing children from absconding and the unauthorised access of people into the care rooms.
- Hazardous materials such as cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- The outdoor area was fully secured and enclosed with fencing and high walls.

Infection Control:

- Toilet roll was hygienically stored an easy reach of the children, preventing potential cross contamination.
- Perishable food items brought in from home were refrigerated in children's individual lunch boxes until snack or lunch time, preventing harmful bacterial growth.
- Cleaning charts were displayed.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications are not routinely given within the service, but staff demonstrated knowledge on the procedure for medication administration if required.
- Emergency medication and healthcare plans were clearly displayed and prominently positioned in each relevant care room, ensuring quick access to emergency medication when required.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The registered provider did not ensure a safe ambient room temperature was maintained between the recommended 18 and 22°C in Seomra Rince on the day of inspection. The following was observed:
 - An ambient room temperature of 26.5°C was recorded at 1:55pm, two children were observed to have flushed faces and were sweating. It is acknowledged that water was freely available, children were in light

clothing eating, blinds were down, a fan was on, and windows were opened. This increased temperature poses a potential risk of children overheating.

- The temperature of the sinks which were accessible to children exceeded the recommended temperature of 43°C. This posed a potential scald risk to children. The inspector recorded a temperature of 49.9°C at 12:03pm in Seomra Gael. Staff and the Person in Charge were immediately alerted and measures were put in place by the service to address this risk.

Infection Control:

- The units used for storing toys and children's personal belongings were visibly dirty, the cloth covering prevented ineffective cleaning, posing a risk of harmful bacteria.
- Pedal bins were broken in Seomra Driocht, Seomra Rince and Seomra Gael, this posed a potential risk of cross contamination.
- Play and sleep materials were observed to be stored in the sanitary area of Seomra Dríocht. This posed a potential risk of cross contamination of harmful bacteria.
- A number of wall surfaces in the care rooms sampled were chipped, dirty with paint peeling. The following was observed:
 - A wooden box surrounding the toilet in Seomra Rince was broken which prevented effective cleaning.
 - Shelving used for storing toys and children's personal belongings in Seomra Dríocht were worn, preventing effective cleaning.
 - Walls in the sanitary area of Seomra Gael cracked and worn, preventing ineffective cleaning.

Fire Safety:

- The child attendance records in Seomra Gael and Seomra Rince were unclear and did not clearly reflect the children in attendance in each separate room. This poses a risk for children being accounted for in the event of a fire.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The registered provider stated that the room was closed the following day and children were moved to a cooler classroom that was not in use. Extra fans are to be provided, and the room temperature will be monitored to ensure it is a safe temperature.
- The water temperature was reduced on the day, and the water temperature will be monitored throughout the day.

Infection Control:

3. The registered provider stated that the unit has been cleaned, and the cloths removed.
4. Pedal bins have been replaced.
5. Play and sleep material has been removed from the sanitary area of Seomra Dríocht.
6. The registered provider has stated that the wooden box has been removed. That the shelving unit will be replaced before the new school term in September. The walls in Gael will be painted before the new school year.

Fire Safety:

7. The tablet attendance record has been changed to show each child in the room they are allocated too, the registered provider stated that they will ensure the tablet attendance record for the Summer is used in this updated way.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Email received.
2. None

Infection Control:

3. none.
4. None
5. None.
6. None.

Fire Safety:

7. None

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider have been sufficient to address the non-compliances in Regulation 23 for points 1,2,3,4,5 and 7. Point 6 is partially accepted, it is acknowledged that there is a plan in place to address point 6 in full, this will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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)

Persons trained in first aid to include First Aid Response (FAR) were available to the children during the operational hours of the service.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was safely stored and easily accessible in a conspicuous position within the premises.

(b) The first aid box was readily available to the adults caring for the children attending the preschool service.

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 registered provider ensured that a record was kept in writing of fire drills within the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated the 19 June 2025.

(b) A record was available indicating the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment with records demonstrating it was last serviced in December 2024, and the number type and maintenance of the mains powered smoke alarms throughout the service, these were last serviced on the 22 November 2024.

(2)

(c) The registered provider ensured that the fire drill and maintenance records were available for review by the Inspector.

(4)

A notice of procedures was displayed throughout the service indicating the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the premises was insured as a full day care service for the maximum number of children registered. The certificate reviewed had an expiry date of the 27 of March 2026.