

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL168
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Name of Service:	Little Friends Playgroup
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Address of Service:	23 Swords Manor Way, Swords, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K67 X3W2
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Name of Registered Provider:	Joan McCormack
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5, The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Little Friends Playgroup is a private service which provides sessional care and education to children aged between 2.5 to 5 years of age and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme which operates two sessions daily from 8.45am to 11.45am and 12.00pm to 3.00pm Monday to Friday.

The service operates from one care room on the ground floor to the side of the registered providers residential home on the northside of Dublin city. An enclosed outdoor area is available to the rear of the service.

Staffing

Three staff members work in the service to include the registered provider, designated person in charge and one childcare practitioner. There were three staff members present on the day of inspection working directly with the children.

Methodology

Tusla 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

The unannounced inspection focused on an examination of compliance under The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

- Regulation 9 Management and recruitment (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4),
- Regulation 11 Staffing Levels (1)(2),
- Regulation 15 (1)(a)-(j), (3)(c) , Record of pre-school child,

- Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials,
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child,
- Regulation 25 First Aid and
- Regulation 28 Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 (1)(a)-(j), Record of pre-school child.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

The staff files of three staff members employed in the service were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) Two written references from a source other than past employers were available for the registered provider and two written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available for two staff members.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for three staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for one staff member who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for more than 6 months as an adult.

(4) On review of documentation available three staff members working with the children had evidence to demonstrate that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection. There were 3 adults caring for 14 children aged 2.5 – 5 years during the morning session and 3 adults caring for 8 children in the afternoon session.

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.

(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 records maintained for the total number of 14 children attending the morning session were inspected and all were found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspector as an authorised person.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The care room was a bright and inviting space for the children which created an atmosphere that was welcoming and engaging. Areas within the room were available and accessible which enabled the children to develop their skills and interests and become independent and confident learners. Materials available included a home area, construction space, small world, tabletop games and puzzles, arts and crafts and a rest area with a library. Each area was well equipped with supporting equipment displayed on low shelving which assisted the children in making choices in their play.
- The care room walls were used to create a visual curriculum plan and daily routine for the children to refer to and transition easily between activities. Pictures of each child’s family and a birthday calendar were displayed in visual positions to provide the children with a sense of belonging and assist with their settling into the service. Staff maintained a scrap book for each child which were displayed on shelving and included pictures and monthly observations completed by staff along with activities completed and celebrations held in the service.
- A selection of age-appropriate outdoor play equipment was available in the fully enclosed paved surface outdoor play area to the rear of the premises. Equipment available included ride-on toys, covered activity tables with sand and moulds, large plastic blocks, a garage with cars, a construction bench with screws and screwdrivers, a doll’s house with furniture and figurines. A sheltered area was available which enabled the staff and children to enjoy outdoor play in all weathers. A locked shed was provided to store the outdoor play materials.

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 care room was closely monitored by staff who granted access by a key which was stored out of the children's reach.
- The care room was observed to be suitable and safe with all cleaning agents and sharp implements out of children's reach.
- Low level windows and all blind cords in the care room were secured.
- The premises and outdoor play area was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. The front gate leading from the roadway into the outdoor play area was locked when the children were present in the service and outdoor area.
- The water temperature in the sanitary accommodation in the service did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.

Infection Control:

- Adequate hand washing facilities were available in the sanitary facilities used by the children, these included thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins. Children were observed to wash their hands before lunch and after using the toilet.
- Children's perishable food from home was refrigerated on arrival to the service and staff were observed cleaning the tables before and after lunch.
- The service was observed to be clean and well maintained with cleaning schedules in operation within the care room and sanitary facility. The care room and sanitary facility had open windows to extract any stale air.
- The outdoor sand pit was fitted with a secure lid to prevent contamination by animals and birds when not in operation.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

- Staff were familiar with the service medication administration policy and records were maintained when medication was required to be given to a child while in the service. The completed records included signed parental pre consent and were also signed by the two staff members who administered the child's medication and observed the medication.

Fire Safety:

- Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were completed in the service and all fire equipment to include fire extinguishers and smoke detectors were serviced yearly.
- The designated fire exit was illuminated and clear of any obstructions throughout the 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) The registered provider ensured that three staff member was trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) certification with an expiry date of the 1 December 2025.

(2)

(a) and (b) A first aid box was available in the service and suitably equipped and accessible to the adults responsible for caring for the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available for inspection for a maximum of 22 children on a sessional basis with an expiry date of 27 March 2025.