

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL183
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Name of Service:	Little Pumpkins Playschool
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Address of Service:	Nutstown, Oldtown, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A45 X761
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jill Donnelly
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	N/A
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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 Pumpkins Playschool is a sessional Early Years service located in a rural setting in north County Dublin offering early childhood care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 9:30am to 1.00pm. The service operates from the front room and adjoining conservatory in the residential home of the registered provider. Sanitary accommodation for children is accessed through the hallway of the residence. There is an enclosed outdoor play area in the garden that is directly accessed from the conservatory.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service and employs two staff members.

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, premises and facilities under regulations 9,11,19,23,25 and 26. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

(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.

(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 was the designated person in charge of the early years' service and there was a named person available to deputise as required, both of whom were present on the day of inspection.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service on the morning of inspection.

(2)(a)(b)(d)(4) Staff files met the requirements of this regulation at the previous inspection on 9 May 2023. As no new staff members began employment in the service since the previous inspection, staff files were not reviewed on this occasion.

(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.

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The correct adult to child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection. There were 3 adults caring for 13 children aged 2 years 8 months to 5 years of age.

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)

Basic Needs:

- The staff members were observed to be kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and the atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred.
- Healthy eating was promoted within the service with staff working with parents and children to encourage healthy packed lunches. Drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the session. The staff members sat with the children at snack time encouraging conversations and extending interactions.
- The children were observed using the toilet under supervision, with assistance provided by the staff member when necessary.
- Children were observed moving freely within the care rooms and facilities to include an adult sofa, mat and cushions were available should a child need to rest and take a break from activities.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The care rooms were bright and inviting spaces for the children which created an atmosphere that was welcoming and engaging. Areas within the rooms were available and accessible which enabled the children to develop their skills and interests and become independent and confident learners. Materials available included a large home area, construction space, 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. All equipment and materials in the care rooms were appropriate to the age and development of the children.
- An enclosed outdoor area was available to the children at the side of the premises which was accessed directly from the care rooms. The garden was surfaced with artificial grass and had space for games and running. A wooden climbing frame with steps and slide, playhouse, cars, trucks and ride on bicycles

Supporting Relationships around Children:

- The staff members demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences, and frequently initiated conversations with the children, responded meaningfully to their verbal and non-verbal cues and provided regular praise and encouragement using a gentle tone of voice.
- An emphasis was placed on caring for their friends and taking turns among the children and this was evidenced while the children played at the activity table after snack.
- Parents and guardians were communicated with at drop off and collection and received a weekly newsletter which detailed the work and activities completed by the children that week and any planned themes for the following week.
- Staff were observed working well together in supporting the children and transitioning from activities such as snack time and tidy up time.

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 closely monitored by staff who granted access by a lock which was positioned out of the children's reach.
- The care rooms were observed to be suitable and safe with all cleaning agents and sharp implements appropriately secured.
- 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.
- The outdoor area was enclosed and secured.

Infection Control:

- Warm water and liquid soap were available at the sink in the sanitary accommodation to support effective handwashing. The children washed their hands after using the toilet and before their snack.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

- Children’s perishable food from home was refrigerated on arrival to the service and staff were observed cleaning the tables before and after lunch.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection

Fire Safety:

- Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were completed in the service. All fire equipment to include fire extinguishers and smoke detectors were serviced yearly.
- The designated fire exits were 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 a staff member was trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) certification with an expiry date of the December 2027.

(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 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)
- The last recorded fire drill that took place in the service were the 15 December 2025.
- (b)
- The number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was present in the service, both were serviced in October 2025.
- (4)
- A notice of the fire procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency were clearly displayed in the care rooms and hallway of the service.