

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE102
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Name of Service:	Little Scholars
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Address of Service:	Unit 2 Dowling's Car Park, Prosperous, Naas, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 VC43
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Name of Registered Provider:	Una Dunne
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	13/03/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	53	PM	24
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Centre, Ballymore Eustace Road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan, F. Maher
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	n/a
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Description of service

Little Scholars was established in 2014 as an early year's service for pre-school children aged 2 to 6 years.

The service provides full day, part-time time and sessional childcare and education to pre-school children from 7.30 am – 18.30 hours, Monday to Friday. School aged childcare is also provided in the service.

The Early Years' Service is located in a purpose-built premises in Prosperous. There are four pre-school rooms; a kitchen, office /staff room and a secure outdoor play area are located on the premises. Set down and parking facilities are available outside the premises.

Staffing

The Registered Provider, the manager, eight childcare staff and one cook were present during the inspection. The manager was supernumerary and was able to provide additional cover in the preschool rooms when required.

All adults employed and working directly with pre-school children held qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent.

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 and safety.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1),(2),(8)(a) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 24 – Checking in and out and record of attendance.
- Regulation 25 – First Aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

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, 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

(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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

Fourteen staff records were reviewed.

(2)

(a)(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source in the absence of a past employer reference were available in respect of fourteen adults employed in the service whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for fourteen employed staff members. 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 in a state other than the State for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4) Nine adults employed and working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher 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.

(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.

Compliance Information

(1) There were fifty-three children attending the service being supervised directly by nine adults.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day as specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6.

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

There was a sufficient amount of age and developmentally appropriate toys, materials and equipment available both indoors and outdoors for the children to use and play with throughout the day. Low level open shelving units displaying the pre-school materials and equipment ensured all resources were freely available and easily accessible to the children in each room at all times. Each group of children were observed actively engaging with and using the available materials/equipment in each room, this included water play, sand, playdough and art and craft materials. The resources and materials facilitated all types of play and learning and encouraged each child to experiment and use their imagination.

Child sized tables and chairs were maintained in good condition and were age appropriate allowing all children to sit comfortably for tabletop activities and when eating their food at meal times.

The outdoor play area provided to the side of the premises was enclosed by high wooden fencing and secured with an electronically controlled gate.

The outdoor area at the side of the premises was spacious and the surface was covered in artificial grass carpet to enable use in all weathers. There was plenty of space for the children to run and play freely. The outdoor area was well resourced with trikes, scooters, see saws, slides, sand and water play, a climbing frame, a variety of loose parts to stimulate the children's imaginative play and a covered secured area for football at the bottom of the outdoor area. There were covered areas and sails were used to provide further shade during sunny weather.

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 entrance door to the service was controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school rooms. The person in charge documented the inspectors visit to the service in the visitor's book on arrival. Indoor and outdoor environmental risk assessments were completed daily to ensure a safe play and work environment for the children and staff. Cupboards were observed secured with safety clasps and medication was stored in the kitchen which was inaccessible to the children. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Staff members were aware of the foods that may pose a choking risk to a child. They also stated that they would remove any necklace/beads if observed that a child may be wearing on arrival to the service.

The children were safely supervised and escorted on the stairs by two adults.

Infection Control:

There was an infection control policy in place. Children's hand washing routines were well established and children were observed washing their hands before snack time and following outdoor and messy play.

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels in paper dispensers were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying.

Foot pedal operated bins were in place for the hygienic disposal of used paper towels. Nappy change facilities were available for any child who was not fully toilet trained. A nappy changing step by step procedure was displayed in the sanitary area to support nappy changing practices. Cleaning schedules were available to evidence daily cleaning in each care room.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. Medication was stored safely out of the reach of children. The staff members were aware of the administration of medication policy and the safe practices to follow when administering medication. A health care plan was available for a child who required medication to be administered while attending the service.

Safe Sleep:

It was observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in their care. The staff members were familiar with current best practice guidelines in relation to reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. Low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep.

Fire Safety:

The staff members were familiar with the fire safety evacuation procedures from the service in the event of a fire or other emergency. Fire exits were not obstructed. Appropriate fire signage was in place in the service and assembly signage was in place outside the service.

Outing:

The service does not conduct outings. This was confirmed by the manager of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) no person other than-
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,
 - (iii) an employee, or
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a),(b) The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.
- (4) The records are retained for the required period.

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 were trained in in First Aid Response (FAR) for children and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position on the ground and first floors.
- (b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available to 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 firefighting 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) A written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 2 February 2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm was last serviced in January 2024
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the entrance hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children in the service were observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection. Children were observed being adequately supervised while using the stairs