

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE160
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Name of Service:	Early Scholars
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Address of Service:	25 The Old Mill Race, Athgarvan, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W12 AE42
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Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Fleming
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child & Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Ballymore Eustace road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher, T. Duignan
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).

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Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

Description of service

Early Scholars is one of four services operated by the registered provider in counties Laois and Kildare. Full day care, part time and sessional care and education is offered to children aged 0-6 years. Opening hours are from 07:30am -17:30hrs, Monday-Friday. The service operates from an adapted two storey house, in a private housing estate in the village of Athgarvan outside Newbridge, Co. Kildare. Four of the five pre-school rooms are currently operating; a sleep room and kitchen are also provided. A standalone unit to the rear of the premises operates as the office and staff room. The play area is located to the rear of the building and carparking is available outside the service.

Staffing

There are eleven adults employed in the service. There were eight adults present on the day of inspection, this included the person in charge, the area manager, the cook and five adults working directly with the children. The registered provider was not present and does not work directly with the children.

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.

The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

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Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4), (7)(a) - Management and Recruitment

Regulation 10 - Policies Procedures etc. of Pre-school Service

Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) - Staffing Levels

Regulation 16(1)(k) – Record in Relation to Pre-school Service

Regulation 19(3) - Health Welfare and Development of Child

Regulation 27 - Supervision

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

The inspection was triggered following receipt of information to the inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, area manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.*
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*
- (c) these Regulations.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a), (b)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required on the day of inspection.

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Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that four new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. These records were reviewed.

(2)

(a), (b) Two written and verified references from a past employer or a reputable source were available as required in respect of the staff member whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all employed staff members.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.

(d) Police vetting was available required for one adult who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Four adults working directly with pre-school children, held a qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(7)(a)

There was documentary evidence available of the following:

- Ten adults had completed Children First e-learning training module.
- The designated liaison person and the deputy liaison person named in the service as the persons to manage child safeguarding concerns had completed the necessary training for the role.
- Induction training was completed for new staff members commencing in the service. This was currently being completed for two newly recruited staff members.

Non-Compliance Information

(7)(a)

1. There was no documentary evidence available that a system of regular structured team meetings was held with the staff. It is acknowledged that meetings had occurred in March and August 2025 however there was no meeting scheduled since 13 August 2025.
2. There was no evidence that individual staff supervision was completed between the person in charge and each staff member on a regular basis.
3. There was no documentary evidence available that service wide training had been undertaken in the policies and procedures for the service or evidence available that staff members had attended courses relating to

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professional practice and development to ensure their competencies aligned with the policies, procedures and statements of the service.

(b), (c)

4. There was no evidence of service wide staff training undertaken in the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. A staff meeting has been scheduled for the 16th of April 2026.
2. Individual Supervision and Support meetings have been commenced and will be completed by the 17/04/2026.
3. Policies will now be discussed monthly at staff meetings.
4. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 has been disseminated to all staff.

Preventive Action

1. An annual schedule of meetings has been created for all branches of our service. Managers will schedule monthly staff meetings and keep a record of the minutes in a "Training and Meetings" folder.
2. One to one Supervision and Support meetings will now take place every 6-8 weeks and a record confirming completion will be kept in the "Training and Meetings" folder and a copy in the staff member's file.
3. The relevant policy will be issued to staff prior to the staff meeting and then discussed at the meeting. Staff will sign off on the new signature sheet for policies, kept in the policy book with the relevant policy.
4. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and any training requirements, will be discussed at the staff meeting on the 16/04/2026.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documents x 4

Summary Comment

Following review of the written response and supporting documentation, the inspectorate is satisfied the requirement for Regulation 9(7)(a) has been met.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the following required written policies, procedures, and statements specified in schedule 5 were in place in the service.

The content of the following policies was reviewed and met the requirement of the regulations:

- Behaviour management
- Accidents and incidents
- Staff training

A child safeguarding statement was in place in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The following policies were not available for inspection:

- Staff induction
- Staff supervision
- Supervision of children indoors/outdoors

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following new policies have been started (i) Staff Induction Policy (ii) Staff Supervision (iii) Staff Training. We aim to complete the revised policies by the 01/05/2026.

From 01/05/2026 we will be reviewing all policies in line with “A Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services.

Supporting documentation submitted

None submitted.

Summary Comment

As the relevant policies have not been completed to date, the requirement for Regulation 10 has not been met at this time.

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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)
There were 19 children attending the service being supervised directly by 5 adults.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.
- (8)(a)
There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection.

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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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(k)

The service maintained an accident and incident book which contained a record of accidents, injuries and incidents involving preschool children attending the service. A sample size of 10 accident and incident reports recorded between 12/11/2025-02/03/2026 were assessed and contained all the relevant information and details, including staff and parental signatures.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(3)

The children were observed happy, content and relaxed within their pre-school room environments. Staff were observed being respectful towards the children in their care and gentle touch and voice tones were used. Children's first names were used by the staff and there was emphasis on positive praise and encouragement. The staff in all rooms, in conversation with the inspector, were very clear on what are and are not acceptable ways of responding to and caring for children and babies and described how they would comfort and reassure any child if they became upset, tired or distressed. The staff advised they were aware of the prohibited practices not to engage with when caring for children.

Communication with parents occurred on a daily basis at the drop off and collection times and daily diaries in the younger care rooms kept parents updated on their child's day including daily care needs attended to and the daily activities engaged with.

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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 were observed being supervised for the staff caring for them at all times. Staff were observed to position themselves at various points in the play area to see and hear the children. Children were supervised indoors when using the stairs, during mealtimes/snack, tabletop activities and when handwashing and using the toilet.