

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH060
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Treasures Preschool
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Mount Hawthorn House, Blackbush Lane, Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A92 XR64
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Mark Gibbons
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	13/01/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	17	PM	14
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords, Co Dublin
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. McDonnell
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable
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### Description of service

Little Treasures Preschool is based in a residential area in Co. Louth. The service is registered to provide part time and sessional care to children aged 2-6 years old. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The service is based in a converted section of a residential property with the two adjoining care rooms on the ground floor. There is an outdoor area to the rear of the premises, a small kitchen area and sanitary facilities.

### Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service. The registered provider employs four staff members. Two of these work directly with the children on a daily basis. The two other staff provider relief cover as required.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 20 Facilities for rest and play, Regulation 21 Equipment and materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of a child, Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures, Regulation 27 Supervision, and Regulation 29 Premises.

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 was issued on the 14 January 2026 regarding the absence of a Garda Vetting disclosure for one staff member. The registered provider submitted a response which mitigated the risk on 16 January 2026.

### Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the 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
- (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) There was a designated person in charge of the service, and there was a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, and review of the staff attendance it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge was on the premises.

(c) On discussion with staff members there was a clearly defined person in charge and deputy person in charge to ensure lines of accountability.

(2) The recruitment files of the registered provider and four staff members were reviewed.

(a)(b) References for staff were reviewed and were available as follows;

- Two written references were available for the registered provider.
- Two written and validated references were available for 3 staff.
- Two written references were available for 1 staff member.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for three staff members and the registered provider. However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years following a review of staff members previous employment in the service.

This is examined in Regulation 23.

(d) A review of the documentation available demonstrated that the registered provider, and the four staff members did not require police vetting.

(4) There was documentation available to demonstrate that the four staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

## Non-Compliance Information

(a)(b) There was no evidence on the day of inspection that the two written references for one staff member had been validated. This was a non-compliance on the previous inspection in November 2023. The actions submitted following that inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

(c) The registered provider did not have a Garda Vetting disclosure available on the day of inspection for a staff member who had worked in a relief capacity in the service. An Immediate action notice was issued on the 14 January 2025.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

(a)(b) The registered provider has stated the references have been validated. However, the registered provider has stated that the relief staff member is no longer involved in the service. An assurance was given that the Pre School Leader will ensure any new members to the team will have two validated written reference before they commence.

(c) The registered provider responded to the immediate action notice. The registered provider stated that the relief staff member is no longer involved in the service and if relief staff are required this will be from another service owned by the registered provider.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as the staff member is no longer working in the service and assurances were given that steps are being taken to ensure these do not re-occur.

This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

### 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the inspector's unannounced arrival, the adult child ratio was observed to be correct and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult-to-child ratios were observed:

- The 2 staff members and 17 children aged between 3 years old and 4 years 3 months, who attended on a sessional basis worked between the adjoining rooms.
- On the conclusion of the sessional service there were 2 adults and 14 children attending on a part time basis.

(8) (a) Following a review of sign in sheets, and discussions with staff members the inspector could confirm that two staff members were always on the premises when the children were attendance in the service.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or

(b) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that moves premises on or after 30 June 2016,

shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a) The children had access to two adjoining rooms in the service. In these rooms there was space for tabletop and floor-based activities. The layout of the rooms accommodated children to play individually, in small groups and in a large group. For example, children were able to take part in group activities such as reading with one of the staff members, playing with cars and trucks on the floor-based street mat in a small group and doing jigsaws individually on the table. There were large tables available for the children to play and eat at. The inspector observed that whilst children played and ate there were sufficient chairs and space at these tables for the children attending.

(2)(a) The children had access to a large garden to the rear of the service. The garden was enclosed by walls and fences and provided a secure play area. The garden consisted of a large grass and a paved area.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) There was no dedicated relaxation area available for the children on a daily basis. The staff members discussed that they may bring in soft furnishings for children to relax on. However, on the day of inspection this facility was not available to provide children with an opportunity to relax in a quiet area if they required.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b) The registered provider stated that on certain days soft furnishings were being brought in by staff members to create a cosy corner. This was not available on day of inspection, following a discussion there is a dedicated relaxation space.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of relaxation space

#### Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.

### 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 inspector observed that the children were engaged with different activities throughout the inspection. On the inspector's arrival children were listening to a story. Children were sat comfortably on the floor and engaged with the story telling. Other children were doing jigsaws or making puzzles with magnetic blocks in small groups or individually. The children appeared happy with the range of options available and completed these activities until the transition to the outdoor area. Toys and games available for the children were in low level containers on shelves that were accessible to the children. There was a home corner with a kitchen and associated items such as play food, crockery and cutlery. A low-level book self-contained a range of books that were accessible to the children.

The staff members had outdoor boots and coats available for the children that were sourced from home. This enabled the children to play in the garden area which was slightly muddy on the day of inspection. The children were observed enjoying playing running games and using the climbing frame and slide. An outdoor chalkboard was available, and children used this to draw pictures.

### 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.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Following a review of staff members employment in the service one staff member required an updated vetting disclosure.
2. The light fittings were not provided with protective coverings and there was no confirmation that the light bulbs were shatterproof. This presented a possible risk of injury should the light bulbs shatter as they are positioned over the children's workspace.

##### Fire Safety

3. The registered provider did not have a suitable smoke detection system in place in the preschool. The registered provider advised that the smoke alarms were battery operated rather than being wired to the mains electricity supply. A smoke detection system which is wired to the electricity supply is required to ensure the safe evacuation from the service in the event of fire.
4. The registered provider did not ensure that there was regular maintenance of the fire extinguishers. The maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers demonstrated they had last been serviced on 1 February 2024. This did not demonstrate that annual maintenance had been completed to ensure the effective functioning of the firefighting equipment.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that the relief staff member is no longer involved in the service and if relief staff are required this will be from another service owned by the registered provider.
2. The registered provider submitted evidence that shatterproof light bulbs had been purchased.

##### Fire Safety:

3. The registered provider has stated they were in discussion with a fire safety consultant, but no information was provided.

4. The registered provider submitted a maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers for 14 January 2026. The registered provider stated that there will be annual maintenance of the extinguishers.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Lightbulb receipt

Fire Alarm maintenance certificate

### Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan have addressed the non-compliances in points 1, 2 and 4. No action or further information was submitted to demonstrate the non-compliance regarding the provision of acceptable smoke detectors had been addressed, the non-compliance remains outstanding.

## 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) A record of the fire drill on 3 December 2025 was available for review. The service had maintained a record of monthly fire drills.
- (b) The registered provider had evidence of the annual maintenance of the fire extinguishers on 9 September 2024.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed on the noticeboard in 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

The inspector observed staff supervising children primarily by sight throughout the period of inspection. The layout of the rooms which were two open plan adjoining rooms, supported staff in being able to maintain sight of the children. Both staff members had a small cohort of children that they worked. The inspector observed that this allowed the staff members to interact with the children with their games and activities. The staff members were observed responding efficiently to minor incidents between peers and in line with positive behaviour management. During transitions staff members gave clear instructions which supported the children, for example ensuring a small group lined up whilst their peers finished getting ready to play outdoors.

Both rooms had access to their own separate sanitary facilities. Staff members were aware when children were using the facilities, including when they came in from outdoor play. At this time staff members stayed in the vicinity of the indoor area and engaged with the children to support constant supervision.

The outdoor area was a long garden area with a paved area at the care room entrance. Recent weather had made the grass area muddy, however staff members provided appropriate supervision in helping children as required and reminding them to be careful.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

## Compliance Information

(b) The service had a secure entrance to the service. The main entrance had a doorbell and door lock in place. This prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children.

(c) Following the previous inspection in November 2023 the inspector observed that the mechanical ventilation in the internal toilet was in place. The service was appropriately heated and was 21°C on the day of inspection.

(d) The care rooms were observed to be clean and maintained effectively.

(e) There were two toilets and handwash basins available for the children attending the service. A staff toilet was available in the main house which was accessible to staff using a key.