

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LM025		
Name of Service:	Little Learners Ltd		
Address of Service:	Diffreen, Glencar, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim		
Eircode:	F91 KH9N		
Name of Registered Provider:	Tom McMorrow		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	05/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello		
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

The service operates from a community centre in the village of Diffreen. The service has exclusive use of this centre in the morning with a designated care room and sanitary accommodation. The service has a secure outdoor area to the rear of the property and access to a large hall for activities in inclement weather.

Staffing

Three adults are employed in the service with two adults working directly with the children throughout the session. One adult is employed in a relief capacity providing cover for annual leave and absences. The Registered Provider does not work within the service.

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 regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation 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*

(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) (b)

There was a person in charge and a nominated person to deputise as required.

(2) (a) (b)

Three adults are employed in the service, all three staff files were reviewed on the day. Three validated references from a past employer and one validated reference from an other employer were available in respect of two adults employed in the service.

(2) (c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(2) (d)

International police vetting was not required as the three adults had not lived outside of the state for six consecutive months or longer.

(4)

Three adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

One adult did not have validated references available on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the Registered Provider stated:

Staff Member in question has received a reference from a previous employer and it has been validated and added to their staff file

Staff files will be regularly checked, and any new staff being employed will be asked to provide valid references which will be verified and kept on file

Supporting documentation submitted

- Validated reference submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the Registered Provider adequately address the non-compliance found on 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.

(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)

There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were two adults working directly with eleven children in the morning of the unannounced inspection.

(3)

The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service.

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The large care room is equipped with various resources and materials to stimulate the preschool child. Low level accessible shelving is stocked with baskets of resources including soft toys, kitchen resources, play food, small animal toys, dolls, cars and trucks, building blocks, puzzles, jig saws and fine motor toys. A home corner with a kitchen and a construction area are set up in the room. A rest area with library allows children to opt out of activities and take a break. The walls of the care room are decorated with various educational posters including days of the week and months of the year. A family wall with pictures of the children's families maintains a link to the family home. A birthday wall with pictures of the preschool children and dates of birthdays ensures that important dates are celebrated.

On the day the children spent the morning directing their own sense of play moving from one area to another. Some children completed artwork, while others played with cars and blocks in the construction area and others played in the home corner looking after babies and role playing 'hairdressers.' A structured art activity took place prior to circle time where all children were included and demonstrated their learning around shapes. Circle time involved roll call, singing songs and actions songs. This time involved all children in the service and all children appeared to enjoy the activities, participating enthusiastically.

The children spent some time in the outdoor area prior to lunch time developing gross motor skills. The outdoor area was equipped with slides, climbing frames, see saws, balance blocks and footballs. The children were observed to enjoy this experience, running around, jumping, playing football in groups and individually.

After snack time, children completed tabletop activities including puzzles and jigsaws supported by the staff members.

(1) (b)

All children in the service were toilet trained, and independence was promoted throughout. Children were encouraged to use the bathroom independently and prompted about hand hygiene if required. The staff members were observed to be kind and considerate in their interactions with the preschool children. When completing tasks, the staff members were heard to offer praise and encouragement throughout, for example ‘...well done...great help...that is so good....good try..’. The children were observed to be content in the company of the staff members and their peers with lots of fun and laughter observed.

The service provides all food in the service which is prepared on site in line with the service healthy eating policy. On the day the snack provided consisted of a fruit platter with apples, grapes, and bananas. A variety of sandwiches and buttered toast. Snack time was observed to be a pleasurable experience for all with staff members sitting alongside the children discussing recent events. Drinking water and juice was available for the children throughout the session.

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 secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival, preventing unauthorised access to the service and unsupervised egress.
- The outdoor area was fully secure with high white metal fencing and a secure gate.
- External waste bins were secure locked behind metal fencing.
- All windows were risk assessed with restrictors in place.
- Blind cords were secure to the wall.
- Toys and equipment were well maintained and visibly clean.

Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned after messy play and prior to snack time.
- Children’s hands were washed regularly including prior to snack, after painting and after playing outside.

- Liquid soap, paper towels and warm water was available for safe hand hygiene.

Administration of Medication:

- There is no medication administered in the service.

Fire Safety:

- Fire emergency exit doors remained unobstructed throughout the day.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for all three staff members. However, one of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

In a written response the Registered Provider stated:

General Safety:

A vetting application has been submitted for the Staff member in question Garda vetting will be checked regularly for all staff to make sure it is in date.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Application for garda vetting submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the Registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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) All three staff members employed in the service are trained in first aid for children and are available to the children throughout the session.

(2) (a) (b)

A fully stocked first aid box is available in the preschool room and is available to the preschool children as required.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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 service had a record of all monthly fire evacuation drills occurring in the service.

(1) (b)

A record of all firefighting equipment and alarm systems was available in the service with the most recent maintenance date of 14/12/2024.

(2) (c)

These records were made available on the day to the authorised person.

(3)

The person in charge is aware of the requirement to retain these records for a period of five years.

Non-Compliance Information

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were not clearly displayed within the care room on the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the Registered Provider stated:

A child friendly version of the fire drill procedure was put on display in the Preschool room.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the Registered Provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated evidence of a compliant insurance certificate for 22 children in a sessional service up until the 27th of March 2025.