

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>ioUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MH112			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Folks Academy Limited			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	54 Teaguestown Wood, Dublin Road, Trim, Co. Meath			
<b>Eircode:</b>	C15 NP04			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Lisa O'Brien			
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	20/01/2026			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	80	PM	50
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate 80-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords, Co Dublin			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. McDonnell and S. McKenna			
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

Little Folks Academy Limited is located in a residential area in Co. Meath. The service is based in a two-storey building with the Wobbler 1, Wobbler 2, Toddler and Junior Preschool Room on the ground floor and the Pre-school 1 and Pre-school 2 are on the first floor. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional care to children aged 1-6 years old. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). There is an outdoor area on the premises, a kitchen area and sanitary facilities. The service operates a registered school age service.

### Staffing

The registered provider works in the service two to three days a week in a supernumerary capacity. The registered provider employs 20 staff members. There is a person in charge works in a supernumerary capacity and provides support in the rooms as required. There are 18 staff members who work directly with the children. One member works with the afterschool children and in the kitchen.

### 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 and premises. 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 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of a child, Regulation 27 Supervision, Regulation 29 Premises and 31 Notification of incidents.

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
- (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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 is one of two designated persons in charge of the service and both work in the service.

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

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

- (2) The recruitment files of seven new staff members who had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection on 3 June 2025 were reviewed.
- (a)(b) Fourteen written and validated references were available for the seven new staff members.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for the seven new staff members and the registered provider. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years as there was a Garda vetting disclosure, dated within the last three years, available for all previous staff members and the registered provider.
- (d) A review of the documentation available demonstrated that two staff members did not require police vetting. The police vetting required for five staff members was available with a certified translation where required.
- (3) A review of the new staff members commencement dates demonstrated that the registered provider had carried out vetting procedures prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4) There was documentation available to demonstrate that the seven new staff members, whose files were reviewed on the day, 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.

### 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) 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:

- There were two staff members and 10 children aged between 1 year and 3 months old and 2 years and 5 months, who attended on a full day care basis in Wobbler 2.
- There were two staff members and 11 children aged between 1 year and 11 months old and 2 years and 10 months, who attended on a full day care basis in the Toddler Room.
- There were two staff members and 21 children aged between 2 years and 11 months old and 4 years, who attended on a sessional basis in Junior Preschool. Following the conclusion of the session the ratio reverted to 2 staff members and 14 children attending on a part-time/full day care basis.
- There were two staff members and 19 children aged between 3 years and 10 months old and 5 years, who attended on a sessional basis in Preschool 1. Following the conclusion of the session the ratio reverted to 2 staff members and 15 children attending on a full day care basis.
- There were two staff members and 19 children aged between 3 years and 4 years and 10 months, who attended on a sessional basis in Preschool 2. School age care was provided in this room in the afternoon.
- Wobbler 1 was closed on the day of inspection.

(8) (a) Following a review of the roster, 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 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
- (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

#### Supporting relationships around children

The staff members were observed to interact kindly with the children within their care. Staff members spoke of supports in place for some of the children who required additional support. Staff were aware of individual goals

and strategies required for support and were observed being implemented by staff members. This was supported by daily communication with parents as observed at drop off and collection. Children's choice was facilitated for example the theme was healthy eating, and children were given the option of a range of fruit but were encouraged to try what they wanted. The children and staff in Wobbler 2 talked about and sang songs about brushing teeth in line with their curriculum planning, and an activity with a large face with shiny white teeth was created for the children to take part in "brushing the teeth". Children were also included within the daily routine of the service as children were given various jobs. In the Junior Preschool room this included different children being given the job of 'teacher'. Two children were observed sitting in the reading corner and helping their peers talk about the stories and choose books.

### **Basic Needs**

Children were able to use the sanitary facilities on an independent basis were required. Children's independence was support as they were reminded by staff to use the sanitary facilities throughout the session. Children who required nappy changing had this done as required, and staff were observed to use this time to engage in one-to-one conversations with the children.

### **Physical and material environment**

All the activities available and equipment was easily accessible to the children in labelled containers stored at a low level. Children were observed taking out materials and toys on their own and then staff engaging in the play with them, which included dress up toys and art activities. Cosy relaxation areas were also provided which included soft furnishings and books.

The children had access to three outdoor areas which were also directly accessible from care rooms. There was a soft safety material or artificial grass ground covering. Age-appropriate play equipment was provided in the separate sections including outdoor kitchens with pots and pans, slides, ride-on toys, tyres, seesaws, chalkboards, climbing frames and wooden and plastic playhouses.

## 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 access to the kitchen was restricted and children could not access the area.
- Blind cords were secured and were not accessible to children.
- Cleaning agents and medications were stored out of the reach of children.
- Stairways were fitted with handrails suitable to the children and were well lit.

##### Infection Control:

- There was warm water, soap and paper hand towels available to supported effective handwashing, demonstrating the preventive actions from the previous inspection had been maintained.
- The inspector observed a sample of nappy changing which supported effective infection control. The inspector observed that staff members followed the services' procedure which included a new apron and gloves for each change and staff members and children's hands were washed. These procedures were completed before the child was returned to the care room. These observations demonstrated that the preventive actions from the last inspection were in place.

##### Safe Sleep:

- Children under 2 years of age were provided with a cot or a floor bed suitable for their age and blankets for sleep. Sleep facilities were provided in the Wobbler 2 sleep room and the Wobbler 2 care room on the day of inspection.
- Children over 2 were provided with suitable stackable beds and bedding for sleep. Beds were set up in the Toddler room after dinner time to facilitate sleep time.
- Staff members supervising the children for sleep conducted 10-minute sleep checks on the children and recorded information on a child's breathing, position and colour.

### 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 inspectors observed staff supervising children primarily by sight throughout the period of inspection. The layout of the rooms, which were large and open plan supported staff in being able to maintain sight of the children. Staff members were observed supporting children in group and individual activities. The weather was particularly inclement on the day of inspection. Therefore, children participated in active games indoors such as movement breaks and dancing. Staff members engaged with the activities and ensured children were safe through direct supervision. 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 from dancing to tabletop activities and from group reading to a meditation exercise.

Staff members were aware when children were using the sanitary facilities, when in their rooms and ensured children used them in a timely manner. For children on the ground floor a staff member was called to come to the room to take children to the toilet, and they were supervised back to their room.

### 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,*

#### Compliance Information

(b) The service had a secure entrance to the service with a buzzer in place for the main entrance. There were also keypad locks in place at the entrance to the ground floor and the stairs. This prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children. The parents who collected their children after the ECCE session were aware of the access codes to gain access to the building to collect their child.

(c) Heating was observed to be appropriate throughout the service. Lighting could be adjusted as required, for example the sleep room and care rooms used for sleep times were appropriately dimmed for children's sleep.

(d) Following the previous inspection in June 2025 the inspectors observed the areas around the sinks in the Toddler room and Junior preschool room were maintained in good repair with tiles files to allow effective cleaning to take place. Water within the sink in the Wobbler 2 room was observed to drain efficiently.

### Non-Compliance Information

(c) The mechanical ventilation in the shared nappy area between the Wobbler 1 and Wobbler 2 rooms was observed not in working order and could not ensure that stale air was removed.

(d) The wall next to the nappy changing mat in this area was showing signs of wear and tear, as there were sections observed where the paint had chipped off the wall.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) The registered provider has installed new mechanical ventilation units to ensure adequate airflow and compliance with hygiene and infection control requirements. The unit has been installed and is fully operational. As a preventive action the service has an established monthly inspection process which includes the ventilation unit. The fan and vents will be checked regularly and cleaned (including removal of dust build-up by vacuuming) to ensure effective operation. Ventilation will continue to be included as part of monthly inspection checks, and any faults or reduced performance will be addressed promptly by a qualified electrician.

(d) Tiles have been installed on the wall behind the nappy changing mat to provide a smooth, and easily cleanable surface that supports infection prevention and hygiene standards. As a preventive action environmental checks will be included in routine cleaning and health and safety inspections to ensure all surfaces remain intact, sealed, and suitable for cleaning. Any damage or deterioration will be repaired to maintain compliance.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the installation invoice.

A photograph is attached as evidence.

Monthly checklist

## Summary Comment

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

## Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

### Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

*A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:*

*(b) the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981);*

## Compliance Information

(b) The registered provider submitted appropriate notifications in December 2025. A review of documentation demonstrated appropriate agencies were also notified.