

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH112
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Name of Service:	Little Folks Academy Limited
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Address of Service:	54 Teaguestown Wood, Dublin Road, Trim, Co. Meath
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lisa O'Brien
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/06/2024
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Date of Regulatory Compliance Meeting:	18/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	65	PM	49
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham & S Taaffe
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	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Little Folks Academy Limited is a childcare facility located within the local community in Trim, Co. Meath. The childcare service provides full day care, part time and a sessional service to preschool children aged from 1 year to 6 years and to school aged children. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates from 08:00am-17:00pm Monday to Friday. The service is conducted from a purpose-built two-story building. There are six preschool care rooms, Wobbler Room 1, Wobbler Room 2, Toddler Room, Junior Preschool, Preschool Room 1 and Preschool Room 2. A school aged service with a designated school aged care room was also available and Preschool Room 2 is also used for school aged children in the afternoon. Additional facilities include a kitchen, sanitary facilities (nappy changing areas) and two sleep rooms. An outdoor play area is located to the back of the pre-school.

Staffing

The service employs twenty-four staff members, six of whom are on statutory leave, therefore, presently eighteen staff members are currently on the roster which includes which includes a manager, deputy manager, and two supervisors. The manager was the designated person in charge on the day of inspection. The registered provider does not work directly in the service, but the manager stated she is available to staff when 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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 carried out following receipt of a notification of incident by the service to the early years inspectorate.

A regulatory compliance meeting was held on the 18th June 2024, with the registered provider and an external representative for the registered provider.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, 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.

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

(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;

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the manager it was confirmed that there were 3 new staff members working in the service since the last inspection. The complete files maintained for these 3 staff members were viewed by the inspectors.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available from past employers for each of the 3 new staff members whose full files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 3 new staff members. In addition, the files for the registered provider and all remaining staff members were reviewed specifically in relation to their Garda vetting disclosures and these records demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as there was no evidence available in the files maintained for the 3 new staff members that international police vetting was required on their behalf.

(4) The 3 new staff members provided direct care to preschool children, and all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6A) One staff member were employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

(7)(a) Written records were provided for inspection in relation to a staff meeting held in the service in April 2024 where practice issues, non-compliances identified during the service's inspection on 12/03/2024, and a number of policies and procedures were included as agenda items.

There were individual records maintained of scheduled 'job chats' provided by the service manager or HR/deputy manager for 18 staff members which took place between 16/04/2024 and 26/04/2024 with the records indicating that issues including the operation of the care rooms, continuing professional development proposals and teamwork were discussed at 1 to 1 meetings.

Non-Compliance Information

(7)(a)

- It was not evident in the documentation reviewed that the registered provider had ensured that all staff members were provided with relevant information and training when commencing employment in relation to the service's policies and procedures, health and safety issues, use of the service's software application or ordering supplies. This was evidenced in an incomplete induction record maintained for 1 of the 3 new staff members with the process having started on the staff member's first date of employment but no record provided in relation to the induction having been completed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(7) (a)

The registered provider stated that induction records for all new staff will be signed and completed within a staff member's first week of induction.

The service has outsourced a weekly spot check with an early years specialist company who will oversee that all regulations are maintained at the time of their visit.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider has submitted evidence of meetings taking place with staff and new formats for meetings to ensure that induction for each new staff member is complete.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 9, this will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 following policies deemed relevant to this inspection were requested and reviewed and met the regulatory requirement:

1. Staff supervision policy.
2. Drop off and collection policy.
3. Accidents and incidents policy.
4. Complaints policy.

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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on arrival of the inspectors. There were six care rooms in operation.

(2) The adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the care rooms as follows:

Ground floor of the building:

- **Wobbler 1 Room:** One adult cared for 5 children aged between 1 year 4 months and 20 months. All five children availed of full day care.
- **Wobbler 2 Room:** Two adults cared for 6 children aged between 1 year 9 months and 2 years 4 months, all children were availing of full day care.
- **Toddler Room:** Two adults provided care to 10 children aged between 2 years and 3 years 1 month, all children were availing of full day care.
- **Junior Pre-School:** Three adults cared for 16 children aged between 3 years and 4 years, of which 13 children availed of full day care.

First floor of the building:

- **Preschool Room 1:** Three adults (one adult provided AIM support) provided care to 20 children aged between 4 years and 5 years, of which 15 children availed of full day care and 5 children attended a sessional service which operated from 09.00am to 12 midday.
- **Preschool Room 2:** Two adults provided care to 8 children aged between 3 years to 4 years; all children attended a sessional service which operated from 9.30am to 12.30pm.

This room was therefore used to accommodate school aged children in the afternoon in which 12 children were present with one adult.

Additionally, in the assigned **School-aged Room** in the morning one adult cared for 2 school aged children and in the afternoon one adult provided care to 9 school aged children.

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:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1)(i) Details of the staff roster was available for the service.
- (k) A record of accidents and incidents were maintained in the service. Eight of these records were sampled and each were appropriately completed and included parental signatures to document that the relevant parents had been informed and were aware of any such events that had occurred.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(i) While it is acknowledged that a staff roster was available, daily sign in sheets were not available in Preschool Room 1 to show what hours staff worked and their break times. The last sign in sheet available was for the 20th May 2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

16(1) (i)

Daily sign in sheets will be printed for the month ahead by the service manager and placed directly into each room by the service manager on the last Friday of the month.

Break times and cover for all breaks will be assigned on the roster in advance going forward.

The service manager has been given a “to do” list and her tasks for the week ahead are to be prepopulated into this going forward.

Any changes to the staff roster will be changed in real time and updated on the weekly staff roster which will be held in the staff office. A roster template has been designed and sent to the service manager to use going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider has submitted new sign in sheets templates to be completed by staff on a daily basis.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 16, the assurances that staff will sign in on a daily basis has been accepted and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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

Non-Compliance Information

The practice of supervision of children has changed since an incident of a child going missing in the service. Staff were observed doing roll calls and requesting children to answer in a time-consuming and excessively repetitive way. It was observed that children were tired of the process and became restless, one child entered another care room at the top of the stairs as the roll call commenced for the 20 children again. The roll call was conducted in the care room at the door as children lined up, outside the door on the corridor, at the foot of the stairs and in the garden. The rolls calls need to be carried out in a meaningful way, specifically at points when the risk of a child leaving the group has been identified to ensure that is effective and robust for the transitioning of the children, without impacting negatively on the children's participation and well-being.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated the following actions are taking place to address the non-compliance;

Staff are to conduct 1 roll call at 10am, once all the children have arrived.

Staff are to conduct 1 quick roll call before the children go out to the garden, to ensure the numbers are reflective of the actual numbers of children signed in.

Staff are to conduct 1 full roll call in the garden prior to returning to care rooms.

Staff are to check periodically every 30 minutes, by counting the numbers of children present and offsetting this against the daily roll call book. (See memo sent to all staff)

Staff have been directed of the above procedure, and the service manager and deputy manager have retrained all staff in this procedure during a meeting with each staff member separately.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has given assurances that the roll call will be conducted in a meaningful way for children. On discussion with the registered provider, it was stated that a staff member will be at the beginning and end of the children's line on leaving the care room and returning to the care room from the garden. Staff must continue to risk assess this procedure to ensure it is robust and the safety of the children is always paramount.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The entrance doors leading into the service were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and preventing unauthorised persons gaining access to the service.
- Collection times for children were observed by the Inspectors and parents for the children in the Preschool Room 1 and Preschool Room 2 now enter the building using the keypad and come inside the building up to the first-floor lobby and children wait in the hallway and staff call the children's name as a parent or guardian arrives to collect them. Similarly, for the children accommodated in the 4 rooms on the ground floor, parents enter the building through the main front door and collect their children from the individual rooms. The kitchen alleyway is no longer used. The children that are in the outdoor area in the afternoon at home time are collected by the parents by entering the building and coming directly out to the garden to collect their child. This change in practice was communicated to parents by email and the drop of and collection policy has been updated to reflect the new process.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- Since the last inspection the service introduced learning outcome records detailing how the children's well-being, welfare and safety could be more appropriately met in the service, as a result of identified risks or hazards. However, the agreed actions recorded in respect of a child going missing from the service had not been effectively implemented since the last inspection, as evidenced in the documentation reviewed and in discussion with staff members on this inspection. The recently developed learning outcome record relating to a child going missing from the service included the requirement for staff members to keep children in their sight at all times. However, this process was not effectively implemented as a child had left the service unaccompanied and unsupervised on 30th May 2024.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

In relation to the repeated non - compliance a full HR investigation took place.

We have requested support from an external early years specialist company to conduct spot checks in the service to ensure compliance with all regulations, to observe our practice and to make recommendations to assist us to streamline our practices.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider has sought assistance from an external agency. Documentation has been submitted from this agency to state that assist is ongoing and has commenced.

Summary Comment

The assurances given by the registered provider have been accepted by the inspectorate and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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.*
- (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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Records demonstrated that the date and time of attendance and departure in respect of each pre-school child is recorded on a daily basis.
- (3)(a) All persons are approved by an employee prior to entry to the pre-school service. Parents or Guardians of children currently attending receive the code of the keypad to gain entry.
- (b) Visitors are announced and approved by an authorised staff member on arrival, the visitors' details are entered into the visitors' book.

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

On the day of inspection, it is acknowledged that children were supervised at all times. However please see non-compliance in Regulation 19 as supervision practice has changed since a recent incident of a child going missing in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 70 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2024 to the 27th March 2025.

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:

(e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.

Compliance Information

(e) The manager of the service sent a notification of incident to the Early Years Inspectorate within 24 hours of such an incident occurring in the service on 30/05/2024.