

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MH112
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Folks Academy Limited
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	54 Teaguestown Wood, Dublin Road, Trim, Co. Meath
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<b>Eircode:</b>	C15 NP04
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Lisa O'Brien
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	03/06/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	44	PM	44
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath C15 CP23
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S Taaffe 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 a privately-owned early years service which is conducted from a 2-storey purpose-built detached premises located in a residential setting in Trim in Co. Meath. The service accommodates pre-school children aged 1 to 6 years on a full day care, part time and sessional basis, in addition to school aged children. The service operates from 8.00am to 5.00pm from Monday to Friday, participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00 midday and from 9.30am to 12.30pm for 38 weeks each year. Pre-school children are accommodated in 6 care rooms, of which 4 rooms are located on the ground floor, namely Wobbler Room 1, Wobbler Room 2, the Toddler Room, the Junior Pre-school. On the first-floor pre-school children are accommodated in Pre-school Room 1 and Pre-school Room 2. A seventh care room is provided on the first floor which is used solely to accommodate school aged children on a daily basis, while school aged children only are also cared for in Pre-school Room 2 each afternoon.

Additional accommodation includes hallways, a kitchen, sanitary facilities, two sleep rooms and an office. An outdoor play area is located to the side and rear of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs 19 staff members, 1 of whom is presently on extended statutory leave. The registered provider generally works in the service 3 days each week in the role of person in charge. In the absence of the registered provider, the service manager is the designated person in charge. One staff member works with school aged children only in the service, in addition to carrying out cleaning duties on a daily basis.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 29. However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service. The service manager was nominated to deputise in the role of person in charge in the absence of the registered provider.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.30am on the day of inspection. The registered provider and service manager were present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2) Staff files were reviewed at the last inspection on 25/10/2024; on this inspection it was found that 4 staff members employed at that time no longer worked in the service. Following a review of the records compiled by the inspectors on the last inspection, it was also confirmed that 4 members of staff have returned to work from extended statutory leave since the last inspection. These 4 files were not reviewed at the time of the last

inspection and therefore were reviewed on this inspection. The files maintained for the registered provider and the remaining staff members were previously reviewed and met regulatory compliance.

(2)(a)(b) Two written, validated references were available for the 4 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(a) All 8 written references were from past employers.

(b) Not applicable as none of the reviewed references were from a source other than a previous employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the 4 staff members whose files were reviewed.

In addition, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for the registered provider and for all 19 staff members employed in the service.

(d) A review of the 4 employment records maintained in the inspected files demonstrated that 1 of these staff members had lived outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. International police vetting was available as required for this staff member.

(4) The 4 staff members whose files were reviewed all work directly with pre-school children and all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 – 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

### 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 staff working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.30am and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the highest numbers of children were present in each care room during the inspection:

- In Wobbler Room 1 there were 5 children (of whom 4 children were aged 1 year 6 months to 1 year 10 months and 1 child who was aged 2 years 4 months), all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In Wobbler Room 2 there were 7 children (of whom 4 children were aged 1 year 10 months to 1 year 11 months and 3 children who were aged 2 years 1 month to 2 years 6 months), all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler Room there were 6 children aged 2 years 6 months to 3 years, all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Junior Pre-school Room there were there were 13 children aged 3 years 4 months to 3 years 5 months, all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In Pre-school Room 1 there were there were 13 children aged 4 years 5 months to 5 years 4 months, all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members. There were also 2 school aged children present in this care room until 2pm, when they moved to the school aged room for the remainder of this day.
- Pre-school Room 2 was not in operation on the day of inspection due to the inspection coinciding with a 4-day weekend break scheduled on the ECCE school calendar.

The registered provider, the service manager and a staff member on floating duties for the duration of her shift from 8.00am to 12.00midday were available to assist in the care rooms during the inspection, including for nappy changing and break cover.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained 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

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

##### Basic Needs:

- The staff members in each care room in operation were observed to be respectful and responsive in their interactions and with meeting the needs of the children in their care, displaying warmth and positive regard for the children throughout the inspection. For example, a child in Wobbler Room 1 and another child in Wobbler Room 2 were fretful at times on the day of inspection and needed extra comforting and attention which was readily provided throughout the day, with cuddles, reassuring words and singing provided by the staff members working in the two rooms, with soothing effect. The staff in the Junior Preschool and Preschool 1 were observed to provide sufficient time for each child to talk at circle time and story time, and in the Toddler room where some children required comforting after awakening from sleep this was provided in line with each child's needs.
- A selection of cereal was provided to children for breakfast if required. Parents provided the children's morning and afternoon snacks which included sandwiches, bread rolls, crackers, cheese, fruit and yogurts. Dinners are sourced in bulk from a specialist catering company and stored frozen on the premises, in advance of use. Sweet potato and lentil stew was served for dinner on the day of inspection. A 4-week menu was on display on the premises. Drinking water was available and accessible to the children in the individual care rooms. The staff members sat at the children's level at mealtimes, including when feeding the younger children and supporting the children to feed themselves where appropriate. The children in each room were given plenty of time to eat and not rushed.
- The children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner. Staff members were observed engaging positively with the children during these procedures and taking the opportunity to chat with and sing songs to the children. The staff members were observed to be responsive to the children's cues to use the toilet and prompting and support were provided with younger children where required.

- In Wobbler Room 1 the children were observed being placed to sleep in cots when they showed signs of tiredness during the day. The children in Wobbler Room 2 in addition to the children in the Toddler Room who still availed of a day-time nap were facilitated to sleep after dinner, in cots or on sleep mats depending on their age.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children in all the care rooms on the day of the inspection.

### Supporting relationships:

- The staff members in all operating care rooms were observed to interact with children in a sensitive and warm manner. Staff demonstrated their familiarity with the children by talking with the inspectors about their observations of the children, interests, personalities and developmental stages.
- The staff members in the care rooms were observed to work well together and supported each other in the care of the children. Staff members updated each other on the children's care throughout the day which ensured the children's care needs were met in a timely manner.
- Children's behaviour was managed in an age-appropriate and positive manner with distraction and problem-solving techniques used to good effect to prevent any minor issues from escalating.
- The service communicates with parents and guardians on a daily basis in real time on a software application which updates parents on the children's wellbeing and activities in the service. Additionally, the staff members were observed taking the opportunities to interact with parents at collection time and update them on their children's day in the service.

### Physical and material environment:

- In each care room, play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play.
- Wobbler Room 1 and Wobbler Room 2 contained equipment to provide opportunities for the youngest children in the service to engage in physical activity through self-initiated movement with padded floor mats, covered foam wedges and push-along toys provided to support the children's gross motor development. Wall-mounted mirrors supported the development of the children's visual senses. Age-appropriate play equipment to support the development of the children's fine motor skills were provided. These included stacking toys, wooden and plastic bricks, shape sorters, jigsaws, interlocking plastic toys and cause and effect pop up toys.

- The Toddler, Junior Preschool and Preschool 1 care rooms were laid out in designated areas of interest including suitably resourced home corners with baby care items, role play materials and dress up costumes, construction areas, arts and crafts areas and table tops sections with jigsaws and connecting toys. Small world toys to include houses and garages along with cars and small figurines provided opportunities for imaginary play.
- Sensory play was promoted throughout all the care rooms in operation within the service. Sensory materials such as porridge oats, flour with cocoa powder, and coloured rice, pasta and lentils were provided in boxes and exploration trays within the care rooms, which linked in with the current curriculum planning such as transport and emotions.
- A suitable range of books was provided in each care room which supported the children's language development, in each of the care rooms the children were observed having stories read to them during the inspection. Cosy rest areas were provided where children could rest and relax.
- The outdoor play area sub-divided by fencing into separate spaces each of which was covered in impact-absorbent material or artificial grass. 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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered provider and staff members to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service:

#### General Safety:

- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation and the wash hand basins in the care rooms did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection which reduced the risk of children gaining access to items that would pose a risk to their safety, including the oven, kettle, cutlery and sharp utensils.

- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children in locked presses or on high shelves.
- The stairways were fitted with appropriate handrails and children were observed to be appropriately supervised when using the stairs.
- The windows in the care rooms were fitted with restrictive opening devices and blind cords were appropriately secured.

### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service and at the sinks in the care rooms.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and following messy play and outdoor play.
- Soothers were stored in personalised lidded containers when not in use. A portable microwave steriliser was provided in the service. In discussion with the inspectors, staff members clearly communicated appropriate management of soothers and mouthed toys on a daily basis.
- Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies which reduced the risk of cross-infection.
- The outdoor sand pits were fitted with secure lids to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.
- In discussion with the inspectors, staff members described appropriate procedures for the administration of medication to children when required in the service.
- There were detailed child-specific care plans available for a number of children attending the service to authorise staff members to administer an auto-injector adrenaline pen in the event that the children would become exposed to an allergen and develop signs of an allergic reaction.

### Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years slept in a standard cot on the day of inspection. Based on an examination of the children's attendance records maintained in the service, all children under 2 years of age had access to a standard cot on a daily basis.
- In discussion with the inspectors, staff members described safe sleep practices. The records indicated and staff members reported that sleep checks were carried out and documented at 10 minutes intervals, noting the child's position, colour and breathing pattern.

- Adequate space of at least 50cm was maintained between the cots in the sleep rooms off the Wobbler Room 1 and off Wobbler Room 2 and between the stackable beds set up in the Toddler Room after dinner.

### Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

### Outings:

- The inspectors were informed that children do not partake in outings from the service.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Infection Control:

1. Some of the nappy changing practices observed during the inspection were inadequate and posed a risk of cross-infection as demonstrated in the following examples:
  - Babies and children's hands were not always washed after nappy changing.
  - Aprons were not always worn for nappy changing to protect staff members outer clothing from contamination.
  - A nappy changing mat was not cleaned in between children's nappies being changed.

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

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### Infection Control:

Staff have been re-trained in the Nappy changing practices. Management will continue to monitor Nappy changing practices.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

#### Infection Control:

A copy of staff meeting minutes.

### Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 23.

### 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) Accurate details of all children in attendance were maintained during the inspection. The children were entered as present in roll books and on electronic devices provided in each care room, noting each child's arrival and departure time.

(3)(a)(b) The service ensured that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the premises. On arrival the inspectors were requested to record their attendance in a visitor's book maintained in the service and the purpose of their visit.

### 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) A person who held First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in the in-date FAR training records maintained for the registered provider and 4 staff members and their scheduled attendance in the service's staff roster.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes provided in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on both floors on the premises and these were available for the children in attendance, in the event of an emergency.

### 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on 29/05/2025.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 30/10/2024 and the smoke detection system on 28/04/2025.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed throughout 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 had insurance cover in place for up to 110 children attending the full day care service. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2025 to 27/03/2026.

## 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,*

*(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,*

#### Compliance Information

(b) The entrance doors were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. The entrance door leading into the service was secured when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service on the morning of the inspection. Magnetic door release buttons, positioned out of pre-school children's reach, were in place to facilitate adults and accompanying children to exit the corridors leading into the hallways on both floors and also to exit the premises through the front door. Additionally, the keypad door locks provided on a number of doors in the service were positioned out of the reach of pre-school children, the codes of which had been changed since the last inspection. The outdoor play areas were enclosed by fencing and boundary walls to prevent unauthorised persons from gaining entry or a child from gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger.

## Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. The outlet at the low-level wash hand basin in Wobbler Room 2 was blocked and emptying very slowly. This posed a risk that the basin could over-flow, and also children could potentially access un-drained water used by another child which posed a risk of cross-infection.
  2. The walls at the wash hand sinks in the Junior Preschool room and the Toddler room were 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

1. We have had a plumber in fix the blockage. Staff & management will continue to check the sinks on a regular basis.
2. The walls & woodwork in all the care rooms and hallways have been freshly painted. Tiles have been applied around the sink areas to prevent future wear and tear.

## Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 29 (d).