

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH114		
Name of Service:	Little Learners Early Learning Centre		
Address of Service:	Coney Hall, Mornington, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A92 03P8		
Name of Registered Provider:	Aideen O'Neill		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	26/01/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM 0
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin		
Inspection undertaken by:	Michelle McDonnell		
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		

Description of service

Little Learners Early Learning Centre service operates from a converted single storey unit in Co. Meath. The service is registered to provide sessional care from 9.00 to 12.30pm. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The children have access to a large open plan room. There is a kitchen area and sanitary facilities are available. There is access to an outdoor area at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children daily. The registered provider employs four staff members who work directly with the children. The registered provider also employs a contractor to provide activity sessions for the children. There is a transition year student who has been provided with work experience opportunities.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 24

Checking in and out and record of attendance, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures, Regulation 27 Supervision, Regulation 28 Insurance and Regulation 29 Premises.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes 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, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The registered provider is the designated person in charge of the service, and there was also a named person to deputise in their absence.

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

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

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

- (a)(b) The registered provider had two written references available for themselves, and 12 written and validated references were available for the four staff members, the contactor and the student.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure, dated within the last three years, was available for the four staff members, the contactor, the student and the registered provider.
- (d) A review of the documentation available demonstrated that police vetting was not required for the registered provider, the four staff members, contractor or student.
- (4) There was documentation available to demonstrate that the registered provider and the four staff members, who worked directly with the children, 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.*
- 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 3 staff members and 16 children aged between 3 years old and 4 years 8 months, who attended on a sessional basis.

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 communal areas and exits to the service were unobstructed to provide a safe evacuation route.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of children.
- Children brought in grapes from home and these were cut to reduce the risk of choking.

Infection Control:

- Following indoor play children were observed to wash their hands before they ate their lunch.
- Children's lunches, which were brought in from home, were stored in the fridge upon the children's arrival and removed when children sat to eat lunch. At lunch time children were provided with plates should they wish to eat their food out of their lunch box.
- The staff were heard giving verbal reminders to children to ensure they washed their hands after using the sanitary facilities.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider's preventive actions following the previous inspection had been maintained, as all children who were attending the service were signed in on the inspector's arrival at the service.

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) The registered provider ensured that a person trained in a First Aid Responder (FAR) course was available.

There were two staff members with FAR certification.

(2)(a) (b) The first aid equipment was conspicuous and easily accessible to staff members. The first aid equipment available provided adequate resources in the event of a first aid 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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) A record of the most recent fire drill on 14 December 2025, was available for review. The service had maintained a record of monthly fire drills.

(b) The maintenance records for the fire extinguishers demonstrated they were last serviced on 9 May 2025, and the fire alarm was serviced on 1 September 2025.

(4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the room and hallway.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The inspector observed staff supervising children primarily by sight throughout the period of inspection. The layout of the open plan room supported staff in being able to maintain sight of the children. On the inspector's arrival children were participating in their choice of activities and staff members engaged with them at this time. This allowed staff members to support the children in sharing and problem solving to avoid minor disagreements between peers. Staff also supported children to use scissors during art in both a fun and safe way. Due to inclement weather children were provided with opportunities for active games. This included using a parachute and children were supervised ensuring the safe use of the equipment. Some children choose not to participate, and they were supported by staff in other activities such as reading and play.

Staff members were aware when children were using the sanitary facilities which were located outside of the room in the hallway. At this time staff members stayed in the area and engaged with the children to support constant supervision.

On collection children were called as their parent/guardian arrived and were supervised by a staff member from the room, to collect their belongings which were in the hallway and then left the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was appropriately insured for 20 children from 28 November 2025 to 27 November 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,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(b) The service had a secure entrance to the service. There was a doorbell in place, and the main door was locked. This prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children. The kitchen area and storage areas were not accessible to the children.

(c) The service was well lit. Windows and mechanical ventilation were available, and heating were observed to be appropriate in the service, with the care room temperature between 18 and 20°C.

(d) The registered provider ensured that rooms occupied by the children were appropriately cleaned and maintained effectively. Following the previous inspection the preventive actions had been maintained and there was tiling in the sanitary accommodation ensuring the area could be effectively cleaned.

(e) There were two separate sanitary facilities equipped with their own handwash basin available for the children. A separate sanitary facility, with a handwash basin, was also available for the staff members.