

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH119			
Name of Service:	Little Scholars Creche			
Address of Service:	Unit 6, Yeates Centre, Dunboyne Village, Dunboyne, Co. Meath			
Eircode:	A86 A021			
Name of Registered Provider:	Lisa Byrne			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	17/11/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	58	PM	55
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.			
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly			
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			

Description of service

Little Scholars Creche is one of two privately owned early years services which the registered provider operates in Dunboyne, Co Meath. The service provides full day, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children aged 0 to 6 years operating from a two-story premises and is registered to operate from 7:30am to 6.00pm Monday to Thursday and from 7:30am to 5:30pm on Friday. There are 5 care rooms in the service namely the Ladybug room and the Sunshine room which are located on the ground floor of the service, the Rainbow room, Butterfly room, Bumblebee room and Flower room are located on the first floor. There are 2 designated sleep rooms in the service, located directly off the Ladybug room and the Sunshine room. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme each morning from 9am to 12midday in the Flower room and from 9:30am to 12:30pm in the Bumblebee room for 38 weeks each year.

Staffing

There are 19 staff currently employed in this service including the registered provider. Eighteen staff members work directly with the children on a daily basis including the registered provider who provided support throughout the service as required 16 of whom were present on the day of inspection. A chef is employed in the service to prepare and serve the meals.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,19,23,24,25 and 26; 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, assistant 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, 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.

(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 service had a designated person in charge and named persons to deputise in their absence.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

(2) The files for 19 staff members were reviewed including the registered provider.

(a) The following references were available from a past employer.

One written reference was available for the registered provider.

Twenty-five written and appropriately validated references were available.

(b) The following references were available from a source other than a past employer.

One written reference was available for the registered provider.

Eleven written and appropriately validated references were available from.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 19 adults whose files were reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 11 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 18 staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service including the registered provider held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) A review of the staff files indicated that Garda vetting had not been received in advance of 1 staff member commencing employment in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(3) Garda Vetting will be received before any staff member starts in house training in future.

Preventive Action

(3) No staff member will begin in Little Scholars prior to Garda Vetting.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been adequately addressed.

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 members 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 the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Ladybug room there were 7 children aged 11 months to 1 year 5 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Sunshine room there were 11 children aged 1 year 7 months to 1 years 10 months being cared for by 4 staff members.
- In the Rainbow room there were 6 children aged 2 year 10 months to 2 years 11 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Butterfly room there were 10 children aged 2 years 11 months to 3 years 10 months being cared for by 1 staff member during the ECCE hours and 2 staff members outside of these times.
- In the Bumblebee room there were 10 children aged 2 years to 2 years 9 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Flower room there were 14 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 8 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

The registered provider and assistant manager provided support and relief across the care rooms as required.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at 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 observations are examples on how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- Throughout the care rooms there was a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere. Children were observed to be comfortable in exploring their environments familiar with their routines and secure in their relationships with staff members. Staff members were responsive to children's needs and requests demonstrating familiarity with children by recalling their preferences and provided comfort and encouragement to children regularly throughout the day.
- All the children attending the service bring their own morning snack with them from home. The remaining meals and snacks are provided by the service with the main meal of the day sourced from a specialist children's catering company and stored frozen on the premises, in advance of use. The service has a designated member of staff who prepares children's meals and snacks, mealtimes were observed to be relaxed and sociable with staff members sitting with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat and providing assistance as required. In the Ladybug room the staff members sat in front of the younger children who were fed whilst sitting in chairs at a low table warmly engaging with the children at their eye level.
- Children's nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner and staff members were observed to engage with children warmly throughout the procedure. Prompting, supervision and assistance when using the toilet was provided as necessary to the children who were toilet trained.

- Children wore protective bibs at mealtimes and during messy play activities and painting to protect their clothes. Waterproof rain wear and wellington boots provided by the parents and hats and gloves were available in each care room which facilitated the children to play outdoors daily whilst dressed appropriately for the winter weather.
- The staff members in the Ladybug room stated that the children in the care room were facilitated to sleep in cots in the adjacent sleep room when their needs dictated, generally in line with their home routine. This was observed during the inspection with children placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if the children's sleep times coincided with mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke up. The children attending the Sunshine room were facilitated to sleep in cots in the sleep room and in the care room after they had their dinner and the children in the Bumblebee room slept on stackable beds in the care room after dinner. Comfortable rest areas comprising of soft mats, cushions and appropriately sized seating was provided throughout the care rooms should the children chose to take a break from activities during the day.
- The staff members approached children's behaviour in a supportive manner, calmly distracting or re-directing the children and using problem-solving techniques to good effect before any minor issues escalated.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred as evidenced in the sensitivity and kindness shown by the staff members to the children through nurturing interactions in a relaxed partnership style. The staff members were observed listening attentively and giving each child plenty of time to express their thoughts and questions and responding to the children by engaging in individual conversations, joint laughter and shows of affection.
- The staff members displayed a positive attitude to teamwork and were observed to be supportive of each other modelling positive ways of interacting with the children and each other. Staff members were observed regularly updating each other on the children's care which provided a smooth consistent approach to meeting the children's needs.
- In the Ladybug room a daily record of what the children ate, nappy changes, sleep and activities was maintained and shared with parents and guardians. Parents were communicated with in a friendly, unhurried manner at drop off and collection time and received verbal updates on their children's daily progress.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were spacious and provided space for the children's free movement and to enable the children to engage and interact with the play materials that were available on low-level shelves.
- Tables and chairs throughout the care rooms in the service were appropriately sized to support the age and stage of the children attending the care rooms.
- In the Rainbow room, Butterfly room, Bumblebee room and the Flower room interest areas including resourced home areas with play kitchens with a range of accessorial equipment for the children to extend their play including play crockery and cooking equipment, dress up materials, shopping areas, construction materials and transport toys were available. Age-appropriate play equipment to support the development of the children's fine motor skills were also provided in these care rooms. These included jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, shape sorters, magnets, interlocking plastic toys, stacking toys, threading equipment, peg boards and jigsaws.
- Samples of the children's artwork were displayed on the walls in the care rooms which demonstrated that children's creativity was valued and encouraged.
- An enclosed outdoor play area was located to the side of the service. The area was divided into 4 distinct sections to include a construction area with a range of building and construction resources for the children to enjoy, an area with 2 large water tables with wall mounted water pipes for the children to use. Sensory play was further enhanced through the provision of a sand area which included a large sandbox with a variety of toys for the children to use. A home area was provided which included a resourced kitchen area with a table and chairs and a shop area. Gross motor play was supported through the provision of a slide and ride on toys. A rota is in place in the service to enable all the children in the service maximum time in the outdoor area on a daily basis.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. In the Sunshine room, the children's water bottles were stored in the children's cubbies which were up high both out of sight and reach of the children. This did not facilitate the children in asking for or gesturing that they wanted a drink of water throughout the day.

Physical and material environment:

2. There were no toys or equipment provided in the Ladybugs room to support the children to develop their gross motor skills. The Ladybugs room accommodated the youngest children who were aged 11 months

to 17 months old on the day of inspection. Some of whom in attendance were in the pre-walking stage or in the early stages of walking.

3. There was no interest areas developed in the Ladybug room or the Sunshine room for the children. Furthermore, there was a lack of sensory or wooden materials available for the children in either of the 2 care rooms to use.
4. There was no additional equipment readily available to the children in the Ladybug room to use with the play kitchen. The play resources for use with the kitchen were stored on pull out shelves which the children in the room were not developmentally able to access or retrieve.
5. The family photographs that were available to the children in the Ladybug room and the Sunshine room were positioned out of the children's line of vision. This reduced the opportunity for the children to see the photographs and use them to bridge the gap between the service and home.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Basic needs:

1. Drinks bottles are now labelled and on a shelf at child's eye level to encourage non-verbal communication.

Physical and material environment:

2. Developmental age-appropriate gross motor toys have been provided within the room and are altered throughout the day including pre-walk along toys.
3. The room has been divided up into areas of interest, such as the home corner, cosy corner, art area, construction area etc. New wooden toys and materials are available. Kitchen role play is now encouraged in the area of in interest with real life materials and wooden toys.
4. Kitchen toys have been brought down to children's level and are easily accessible. The room has been divided up into areas of interests such as home corner, cosy corner etc. Home life equipment has also been brought in for the children to explore and role play.
5. Family walls have been brought down to children's eye level.

Preventive Action

Basic needs:

1. Drinks bottles will be available to all children throughout the day.

Physical and material environment:

2. New toys have been introduced.

3. New sensory and wooden toys have been bought for the room. The room layout has been redesigned and made into clear areas of interest. Family wall has been moved down to children's level. Kitchen role play with natural materials have been introduced.
4. All toys will be readily available to the children and set up at the kitchen daily to encourage use.
5. Family wall is now at child's eye level and will be used actively throughout the day by the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence received of the following:

The children's water bottles located at an accessible level.

Resources to assist the children with gross motor play activities.

Interest areas in care rooms.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 19- Health, welfare and development of child –has been adequately addressed.

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 entrance doors and garden gates were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Emergency exits were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and at the wash hand basins in the care rooms in the service.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play.

- The children's morning snacks, supplied from home, were refrigerated on arrival to the service which reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years had access to a standard cot to sleep in either in the sleep room located directly off the Ladybug room or in cots that were set up in the Sunshine room for the children to use.
- The temperature in the sleep room was monitored and maintained within the safe sleep temperature range of 16 - 20°C.

Fire Safety:

- The records demonstrated that fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

On the day of inspection Infection control measures were not always in place or followed which increased the risk of both the spread of infection and risk of cross contamination as demonstrated by the following:

1. The gloves that were worn in the service to change nappies were not appropriate. The gloves in use were seamed polythene gloves. These gloves are unsuitable due to the risk of them splitting which poses an infection control risk.
2. Soother management practice in the Ladybugs room was observed to be inadequate:
Three children in the care room used soothers which were stored collectively in a bowl on a countertop in the care room. The soothers were placed uncovered in the bowl when the children arrived in the service and provided to them when going to sleep. The staff members stated that the soothers were not sterilised in the service and were placed back in the children's bags at the end of the day. There was an infection control risk due to the storage method, increased risk of a child being given another child's soother in addition to the inadequate sterilisation procedures.
3. The water in the hot taps in a number of the children's wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation felt cold to touch. The temperature of the water ranged from 11.1°C to 13.7°C. This included the children's wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation located off the hallway on the ground floor of

the service in addition to the water at the 2 children's wash hand basins in the Bumblebee Room. Cold water does not support pre-school children to effectively wash their hands.

Administration of Medication:

4. The administration of medication policy was not followed on the day of inspection as demonstrated by the following:
 - The parents of a child who was in attendance informed the staff member verbally that the child required medication and staff members completed the administration of medication form. A medicine consent form was not completed by the parents in advance of their children receiving medication. The services Medications policy states *"parents/guardians must fill in the medicine consent form of the service authorising the administration of medication to their child. Staff cannot give medicine unless written permission is given"*. The current practice is at variance to the services policy.

Safe Sleep:

5. Sleep checks were not conducted in line with the services sleep policy as demonstrated by the following: Staff members in the Ladybugs room were not recording sleep checks at 10-minute intervals which was at variance with the services safe sleep policy. At 11:40 am when 5 children were sleeping in the sleep room adjacent to the care room it was observed that the last recorded sleep check occurred at 11:10am. All sleeping children must be physically checked every 10 minutes to include checking the child's colour, breathing and sleeping position.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Infection Control:

1. Correct gloves are now used to prevent the spread of germs and infection.
2. Soothers: soothers are now kept on site to be sanitised to prevent cross contamination and to ensure high standard of hygiene. A sanitiser "tree" has now been used with individual labelled "branches" to prevent cross contamination. This will prevent inadequate sterilisation procedure.
3. The boiler has now been serviced to ensure all hand-washing stations for the children are correct water temperature. Water temperature record sheets have now been used to document the temperature.

Administration of Medication:

4. Policies and procedures will be followed alongside with medical administration forms. And will be signed prior to administration where possible.

Safe Sleep:

5. Staff will record via sleep charts to ensure the children's sleep checks are recorded.

Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. New gloves latex and vinyl gloves have been bought and used.
2. Soother sanitiser trees have now been used with individual labels to prevent cross contamination.
Soothers are sterilised in service and remain in service to prevent cross contamination.
3. Plumber has been in to service the boiler to ensure water temperatures are correct.

Administration of Medication:

4. New medicine forms to be signed before medicine is given

Safe Sleep:

5. All staff are reminded of the importance of this and must ensure to complete daily sleep charts.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence has been received of the following:

Appropriate gloves for hand washing.

Soother sterilisation process.

Receipt for plumbers' attendance in the service.

Updated administration of medication forms.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.

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

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

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The children's attendance records were not completed in a timely manner as demonstrated by the following:

- A child in attendance in the Butterfly room was observed not to be signed into the attendance record at 12 midday despite being present in the service from earlier in the day.
- Three children in attendance in the Sunshine room were not observed to be signed into the attendance record at 9.55am despite being present in the service from earlier in the day. It is acknowledged that this was rectified when the inspector brought this to the attention of staff in the Sunshine room.

This poses a risk of the children not being counted under the daily supervision routines or in the event of an evacuation emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1) Role book: All children are signed into rooms and role books as soon as they arrive/ depart from the building with the correct times been documented.

Preventive Action

(1) Staff training and staff handbooks have been revised to highlight the important of correct time keeping and attendance records.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of attendance register.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance has been adequately addressed.

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 trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

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 record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place on 29/10/2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on the 13/06/25 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 11/11/25.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.