

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH006
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Name of Service:	Little Scholars
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Address of Service:	Coolmona, Moydrum, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 PD89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre Healy
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/05/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	NA
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Inspection undertaken by:	C.O' Connor Hughes
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
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Description of service

The service operates on a part time basis Monday to Friday between 08:30 and 13:00 hours. The service provides an Early Childhood Care and Education programme to children aged between 2 – 6years. The service is operated by an independent operator.

The premises consists of a purpose-built single storey building with two pre-school rooms, namely the Superstars and Bright sparks rooms and an entrance lobby to the service.

There is an outdoor play area, an outdoor wooden classroom and a sheltered outdoor section on site.

Staffing

The designated person in charge and three adults were working directly with the children on the 29 May 2023.

The registered provider was not present on the day of the inspection.

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 inspections 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(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.

(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-

- (a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and
- (b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT)

REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I.

No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “

(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.”

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

The designated person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Written validated references were available from a past employer and from a source other than a past employers in respect of all adults.

(c)

Garda Vetting disclosures were available in respect of all adults.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one adult as they had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The procedures in respect (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) were carried out by the registered provider prior to the employment of all adults.

(4)

The adults held a major award at Level 5 to Level 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6) (a)(b)

Not applicable, no employee had signed a declaration on or before the 30th of June 2016 to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in a pre-school service.

(6A)

Not applicable, no employee present was working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

The police clearance available in respect of one adult was not translated into the English language.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective and preventive actions in her response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Staff member has submitted the Police Clearance in the English language.

For future reference we will ensure that all Police Clearance Certificates are translated into the English Language.

Supporting documentation submitted

Police clearance document translated into English.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were thirty- eight children attending the service supervised directly by the designated person and three staff members.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of the seven children were inspected. Information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of the children attending the service.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

Written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k) were available and reviewed.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

Parental information was available in a handbook and leaflet format in the service in respect of Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The designated person in charge presented a copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013) of the Act and Regulations for inspection of (a)(b)(c).

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)

Children were happily engaged in various play activities including free play, tabletop activities, singing songs and rhymes. Sensory play and physical play and construction was supported by the adults in the Superstars and Bright sparks playrooms. There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service as children learned through play.

Transitions were managed smoothly, the children were given a five- minute warning of changing to a new activity via the use of a musical shaker.

Children enjoyed a healthy lunch provided by their parents that consisted of sandwiches, yoghurts, crackers and fruit with water to drink. A little helper system was observed in the Bright sparks room as four children were selected to give lunches to their peers. Children enjoyed conversations and interactions in the outdoor classroom as they ate their lunch supported by the adults. Drinking water was available for children to self -serve as required. Children were encouraged to be independent and used the toilet as required. Health care plans were in place for children that required them, and adults were familiar with the content of the care plan.

The designated person in charge stated children had suncream applied by their parents prior to coming to the service. Children put on their sunhats for sun protection in the hot weather prior to outdoor play.

There was no changeover of adults in the service allowing for familiar and comfortable relationships between the adult and the child. Adults were positive towards the children in their care, evidenced by using children’s individual names, maintaining eye contact and giving positive praise on the completion of activities. Good teamwork was observed between adults during the inspection.

The indoor and outdoor environments provided a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for children. Children’s artwork and photographic displays were noted in the pre-school rooms including “lots of fun at pre-school display”.

The designated person in charge stated the service worked in partnership with parents in the following ways: a parent notice board is displayed, photographs and messages are shared with parents via a short messaging service (SMS), the children’s learning journal depicting all their play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term. A monthly newsletter with information updates is sent to parents. Parents are invited to view the service’s learning journal showcasing all the children’s work and play activities throughout the year.

Links to the community was observed as the service had a “Our County” display board depicting areas of interest that children are familiar with in their local community.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable and adequate facilities for play and work were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, sensory, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, home areas, physical play and sand play.

(b)

Soft furnishings and low- level rest mats provided a suitable rest facility in the pre-school rooms for a child to rest or relax.

(3)(a)

An outdoor play area was available for the children adjacent to and to the front of the service. The outdoor play area was safe and secure surrounded by fencing and a gated entry for access. An absorbent surface, tarmac and grass surfaces were noted. Toys and equipment included a sand area, a digging area, a large climbing frame with a slide, a mud kitchen, a basketball hoop, tunnel and a wooden car.

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:

Entry to the service was secure to prevent access and to ensure children's safety. The door to the service was locked on the inspectors' arrival which ensured no unauthorised access to children. A handover to parents was observed at collection time at the gated entry to the service from the outdoor play area. The Inspector signed the visitors book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks, after wiping their nose, after messy play and after toileting. Children's snacks were stored correctly in the fridge in the pre-school rooms. The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Staff were observed to use correct cleaning procedures to clean up a spillage in the pre-school room. Warm running water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the pre-school room and in the sanitary accommodation. The temperature recorded was 35-41 degrees Celsius at the wash hand basins.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in pre-school rooms and in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste. Natural ventilation was noted through openable windows in the sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was given at the time of the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature. A record book for the administration of medication was available for documentation as required. An emergency care plan was in place for a child with a defined medical condition.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed from the Superstars and Bright Sparks rooms. A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the service.

Outing:

The designated person in charge stated the service has not undertaken outings since the pandemic.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The auto adrenaline injectors (AAI) available for a child with a defined medical condition was out of date. Upon request of the inspector a corrective action was taken by the designated person in charge, the parent of the child was contacted and an in date AAI was brought to the service by the parent.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective and preventive actions in her response:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The parent of the child was contacted on the day and an in date AAI was brought to the service within 30 minutes. We have set up a check list to ensure that all medication left in the service is in date. Before the expiry date parents will be notified to bring in date medication to the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Checklist submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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 designated person in charge and two staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available in the premises.

(2)(a)

The first aid box was available in accessible and conspicuous location in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school service.

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)

Monthly written records for the completed fire drills were available on the premises. The date of the last fire drill undertaken in the service was 20 April 2023.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on the 24 April 2023. The smoke alarms were serviced on the 1 September 2022.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

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

Children were supervised at all times while playing and attending to their needs in the indoor and outdoor environments of the service. Children were advised by the adult to call for assistance while using the toilet as they came indoors from the outdoor play area to use the toilet facilities. The adults were in earshot of the children if assistance was required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted as 27 March 2024.