

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017KY501
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Name of Service:	Little Explorers Preschool Ltd
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Address of Service:	Raheen National School, Raheen, Headford, Killarney, Co. Kerry
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Eircode:	V93 HR40
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon O'Riordan
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	21/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Áras an Phobail, Deans Lane, Tralee, Co. Kerry.
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Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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	N/A
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Description of service

Little Explorer's is a private Early Years service located in a designated classroom in the local National school, in a rural setting in Headford, Co. Kerry. The sessional service operates from 9:00 am to 12:00 midday. A part time service is offered up to 2:00 pm each afternoon. The service can cater for a maximum of 20 preschool children at any one time. A large enclosed outdoor play area is available for the children on the school grounds.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner of the service. A designated person in charge is appointed to oversee the day-to-day operations of the service. There are 2 additional staff employed to work at the preschool. All adults employed and working in the service held appropriate qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings.

Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re-occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

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

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

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued as one staff member present did not have the required Garda Vetting. See Regulation 9 Management and recruitment.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

Compliance Information

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

(b) On the day of the inspection the person in charge was on leave and a deputy person was in place. On reviewing the attendance records there was at all times a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(2) All staff files were reviewed.

(a) Two written and validated references from past employers were available for 2 of the 3 staff working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not obtainable for a staff member, references from reputable sources were available instead.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for 2 staff working at the service. Both vetting disclosures were dated within the last 3 years.

(4) All adults working directly with children held the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were not available for 1 staff member who had recently taken up employment at the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were not available for 1 staff working at the service.

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of the inspection. In a reply to the notice on the 22nd of October 2024, the registered provider stated that this person would not attend the service until the vetting disclosure was returned. A staff who was on leave was resuming work at the service in the meantime to ensure the adult/child ratio was maintained.

(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had lived in a state other than Ireland, for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) in relation to the vetting of all staff were not carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a) The staff member who was present on the day of the inspection who did not have references on file no longer works at the facility.

(2)(c) Garda vetting has been applied for the relevant staff member. While awaiting the disclosure to be returned to the registered provider, this staff member is not working at the service.

(d) The staff member who required Police vetting is no longer employed at the service.

(3) The vetting of all staff will be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to two children in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the application for Garda vetting was forwarded to the Office of the Early Years inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 12 pre-school children and 2 adults on the premises. The adult child ratio was correct in the service.

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) All children's records were viewed. The service had a record in writing containing the following particulars for each of these children.

- (a) The name and date of birth of the child.
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service.
- (c) provision to record 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 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 received by the child was available for 11 preschool children.
- (i) Written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

(h) Record of immunisations received by the child were not available for 4 preschool children.
Not having complete immunisation records may hinder appropriate care for the child in the event the information missing is important to care provision.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All immunisation records that were not fully recorded were returned to parents for completion.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the required completed records were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

The service ensured that each child's learning and development was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

A healthy eating policy was in place and children brought a healthy snack each day with them to the preschool.

On the day of the inspection sandwiches, yogurts, fruit pieces, cheese and crackers were observed in the children's lunch boxes. All perishable foods were stored appropriately in the fridge each morning and children took turns helping to give out boxes at lunches time. Children's drinks were easily accessible to them throughout the morning.

The children who were toilet trained were independently observed using the bathroom facilities. Help was offered if required. Nappy changing facilities were available if needed. Hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were accessible in the bathrooms to ensure hygienic washing of hands.

Soft comfortable seating was located in the library corner of the room. This provided the children with a rest space if they needed quiet time away from the general play areas.

Children had daily access to an outdoor play area in the school yard. Opportunities to run, climb, balance and cycle were available in this space.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The indoor environment was well laid out with a good range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children. Low level tables and chairs provided a space for the children for tabletop activities and for dining at mealtimes. Play equipment and materials were displayed on open low-level shelving and were grouped to provide specific interest spaces. Some of the areas included a construction area, a rest area/library space next to a well-stocked bookstand, an imaginative play area with dress up clothes, a vegetable market stand was set up, a home corner with toy cookers and utensils, dolls, buggies prams. A sensory space with a lava lamp and fairy lights created a relaxation corner. A family tree was created with children's family photos hanging from the branches of the tree. Model farms were well stocked with all the appropriate props of tractors and animals. A large water tray was accessible and open at all times with lots of toys for pouring and measuring in the tray.

A large art and craft trolley with lots of paper, paint brushes and paints were accessible throughout the day. Lots of artwork was displayed around the room with Halloween designs completed by the children all visible. Individual photos of each child with their birthday displayed was exhibited on the wall of the service.

The activities in the room were child led and children were observed directing their own play with many different activities ongoing at the same time. Staff guided and assisted children who needed help.

At outdoor playtime the children all put on their coats, hats and scarves to go outside. Most children were independently able to get ready to go outside. Assistance was offered to the children who needed it.

The outdoor areas of the service offered the children space for physical play, for movement and for exploration. Much of the outdoor play equipment was manufactured using all natural products. Mud kitchens with pots and pans provided an imaginative play space outdoors. Lots of ride on toys were accessible in this space. The area was surrounded by a high steel fence to ensure children could not get unsupervised exit from the area and no unsupervised access to the area was possible.

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) There were 2 staff working at the service who had a first aid responder training course completed. All certificates were renewed in 2024 and in date up to 2026.

(2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was wall mounted and stored within easy reach of the staff in the preschool room.

(b) The first aid box was always available for use.

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.

Compliance Information

((b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment in the premises was maintained. All fire extinguishers were last serviced in March 2024.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) A record was maintained of fire drills at the service however the last documented drill was dated the 1st of July 2024. There was no record maintained of monthly fire drills. Regular fire drills are required to ensure that all children are familiar with the procedure to follow to ensure the safe evacuation of the premises if needed.

(b) The maintenance record of the smoke alarms systems was not available for inspection. There was no record available to indicate when these alarms were last checked.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Monthly fire drills have resumed in the service with a record of each drill documented in writing.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the recorded drills were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The preschool services insurance certificate was viewed. The policy commenced on the 22nd of October 2024 and will be due for renewal on the 27th of March 2025. The policy covered a maximum of 22 preschool children at any one time.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (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

- (a) The premises appeared to be sound and stable structure. There were no observable indications of defects in the structure of the premises.
- (b) The premises was safe and secure. All exit doors were secured to prevent children leaving the facility unsupervised. All fire exits were unobstructed allowing for safe evacuation of the premises if needed.
- (c) There was adequate lighting and ventilation in all areas of the premises.
- (d) All areas were clean, well maintained and all play materials and equipment were in a proper state of repair. Detailed cleaning schedules for the premises were displayed on the walls of the preschool rooms.
- (e) There were adequate sanitary facilities provided suitable for the needs of the children attending.