

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017OY500
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Name of Service:	Little Scholars
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Address of Service:	154 Ballin Ri, Collins Lane, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 KV88
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Name of Registered Provider:	Yvonne Gleeson
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	09/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	58	PM	45
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan, F. Maher
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.
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Description of service

The service is registered as a full day care service to operate between the hours of 07:45am and 18:00 hours. The age range of children that the service can accommodate is 1 to 6 years of age. The Early Years' Service is located in a purpose-built two storey premises. Four pre-school rooms, two sleep rooms, a kitchen, a staff room and a reception area are provided on the ground floor. One pre-school room and an office are provided on the first floor. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. On-site parking and set down facilities are available. The service is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Tullamore, County Offaly.

Staffing

Sixteen adults including the registered provider are employed in the service. On the day of the inspection there were seventeen adults present. Of the seventeen adults present, thirteen were working directly with the children, three students were on placement in three of the care rooms, and a cook was employed to freshly prepare food for the children in the service. The registered provider was present in the service also.

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 and safety. 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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
- (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)(b) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required, both remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
- (c) There is a clear management structure in place in the service, and the staff members were familiar with specific roles and responsibilities of the various staff members in the service.

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that five new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. Four of these new staff members work directly with the children. The files of four workplace students were also reviewed.

- (2)
- (a)(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were available in respect of five adults employed and four workplace students whose staff files were reviewed.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required as no recently employed adult or workplace student had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months whose records were reviewed.
- (4) Four adults employed to work directly with children attending the service and held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher or a recognised equivalent qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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) There were fifty-eight children attending the service being supervised directly by sixteen adults.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.
- (8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis.

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1)

(h) The registered provider ensured that details of the attendance of each pre-school child on a daily basis and recorded arrival and departure in real time.

(i) The registered provider ensured that a daily staff roster was maintained in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

The adults working with the children spoke and interacted with them to in a kind and respectful manner. Their first names were used; appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones were observed being used during all interactions. The adults were familiar with each child and their personality. Access and inclusion plans were in place for children requiring extra support and assistance.

Food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves and their drinks were within their reach throughout the day should they feel thirsty. The staff members sat with the children and encouraged social interaction and conversations.

Nappy changing was completed regularly and promptly when required. It was managed in a sensitive and positive manner.

Needs led sleep was provided to any child requiring sleep in the Wobbler and Junior Toddler rooms however most children requiring sleep, slept at a designated time during the day and were provided with as much time as they needed to sleep.

Older children were encouraged to be independent as they managed their personal belongings and got dressed for outdoor play assisted by adults as needed.

Transitions were well managed throughout the day by the staff members in the service. There was a predictability to the children's day, and the routine was unhurried and paced to suit the needs of the children. The children responded positively to this.

The care rooms were well resourced and presented to encourage child led play and facilitate children's choice. All children are given an opportunity for daily outdoor play morning and afternoon. The outdoor area was located at the rear of the premises.

Information was shared with parents and guardians at the drop off and collection times. A daily written record was maintained in the Wobbler room and outlined food eaten, time nappies were changed, sleep times, activities and other comments. Face to face meetings can be arranged for parents/guardians as necessary and email and telephone contact are used as an alternative method of contact.

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-

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

Comfortable rest areas were available for the children in each care room if they wished to take a break from activities and rest.

Two sleep rooms adjoining the Wobbler and Toddler rooms were available and had a total of 11 cots. This was adequate to meet needs led sleep requirements for the pre-school children aged under 2 years.

Twenty-three sleep beds were available for children aged over 2 years requiring sleep in the service. Appropriate bed linen was provided for all children. It was stored separately for infection control purposes and washed weekly or more frequently if needed.

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 door to the service was secured and managed by the staff to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The outdoor area at the rear and side of the service was secured. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Staff members in each care room advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if observed that a child may be wearing them.

The staff members were aware of the potential choking risks that grapes posed when asked by the inspectors. There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed daily and reviewed by the registered provider to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. The staff were observed washing their hands also. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored in the staff room.

Safe Sleep:

There were two sleep rooms with eleven cots available for children less than 2 years of age; twenty-three low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. There was an adequate number of cots and low-level beds available to provide needs led sleep for young children. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and the required care of sleeping children including sleep room environmental

temperatures and the 10-minute sleep check observations for all sleeping children which was recorded in the sleep log.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out, and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that service does not conduct outings.

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) Four staff members present were trained in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)

(a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the service.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the service on the ground and first floors.

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 observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection by the staff caring for them in their care rooms, in the outdoor area, in the sanitary areas, during the various transitions throughout the day and using the stairs.