

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2019MH001		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Explorers Crèche Ltd		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Summerseat Avenue, Clonee, Co. Meath		
<b>Eircode:</b>	D15 VFT9		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Catherine Brady		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	20/01/2026		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	60	PM 49
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	AM Coyle & Y Kelly		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.		

### Description of service

Little Explorers Creche Ltd is a privately owned early years service which is registered to accommodate children aged 0-6 years for full day, part time and sessional care and education during the hours of operation, 7.30am – 6pm Monday to Friday. The service provides school aged care for children up to the age of 12 years. The service is located in a purpose-built single-story premises in a residential setting in Clonee, Co Meath with 5 care rooms in operation namely the Baby/Wobbler room, Toddler room, ECCE room 1, ECCE room 2 and ECCE room 3. The Service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) from 9am to 12 midday for eligible children. An enclosed covered outdoor area is available to the side of the Service in addition to an enclosed outdoor area which is located to the rear of the service.

### Staffing

The registered provider works alongside a service manager both of whom oversee the operational management of the service on a daily basis in addition to 14 staff members all of whom work directly with the children. A student on work experience placement was present in the service on the day of 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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 19,23,25,26 and 29; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 24. 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, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

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

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, a staff display board and through discussion with the staff team.

All staff files were reviewed which consisted of a total of 17 files maintained for the registered provider, service manager, 14 core staff members and a student who was present on work experience placement on the day of inspection.

(2)(a) One written reference from a past employer was available for the registered provider.

Twenty-six validated written references from a past employer were available for the service manager and staff members employed in the service.

(b) One written reference from a source other than a past employer was available for the registered provider.

Six validated written references were available for the service manager and staff members employed in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 16 staff members and the student who was present 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) International police vetting was available as required for 3 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Sixteen staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service, each held appropriate childcare qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

## Part III – Management and Staff

### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

The following policies were reviewed on inspection and were found to be satisfactory.

- The settling in policy.

### 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 to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- In the Baby/ Wobbler room, there were 11 children aged 11 months to 1 year 11 months being cared for by 3 staff members. In addition, a college student was present in this room, being facilitated to work under supervision in a supernumerary capacity as part of a work experience placement.
- In the Toddler room, there were 9 children aged 2 years 2 months to 2 years 10 months being cared for by 2 staff members. An additional staff member covered during nappy changing times.
- In the ECCE room 1 there were 11 children aged 3 years 1 month to 5 years being cared for by 3 staff members, one of whom was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio in a post funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the ECCE room 2 room there were 16 children aged 4 years 1 month to 4 years 11 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the ECCE room 3 there were 13 children aged 3 years to 4 years being cared for by 2 and at times 3 staff members.

Additional staff were available in the service to provide additional support across all care rooms and provide breaks for meals when required.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times as evidenced in the staff rosters and staff attendance records 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-*

*(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 of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

#### Basic needs:

- Throughout the inspection the early years practitioners were observed to be kind and caring in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences. For example, 2 children in the Baby/Wobbler room were new to the service, and in the process of settling in, the practitioners were observed providing extra comforting and attention to the children using warm and gentle touch and tones in their efforts to engage and support the children and following the child's lead as they explored the environment, to very good effect.
- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service and healthy meals and snacks were provided for the children by the service at regular intervals throughout the day. The children attending the service on a sessional basis brought their own snack with them from home. Throughout the care rooms practitioners were observed sitting with the children warmly engaging them in conversation during mealtimes with practitioners in the Baby/ Wobbler room and Toddler rooms observed sitting at the younger children's eye level, smiling and chatting with the children when feeding or encouraging children to eat independently. The children in the Baby / Wobbler room who were spoon fed were also provided with a spoon to encourage them to master the skill independently. Throughout the care rooms the children's water bottles were available at their level for them to take as they desired.

- The individual sleep needs of the children were accommodated in the service. The children in the Baby /Wobbler room were placed to sleep in the sleep room adjacent to the care room when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if their sleep times coincided with mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke up. The children attending the Toddler room went to sleep after their dinner in a designated sleep room provided for this care room. Children in the ECCE room 3 who still availed of a day-time nap were facilitated to sleep on stackable beds at the service's designated sleep time after dinner. Rest areas including mats, cushions and appropriately sized couches were provided throughout all the care rooms should the children chose to take a break from activities at any time throughout the day.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and promptly when required. The staff members were observed to use this time as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction with the children, singing and chatting to the children throughout the procedure. The children who were toilet trained were supported to be independent in using the toilet with supervision and assistance provided to the children when required.
- All children engaged in outdoor play in either the covered side garden or in the outdoor play area to the rear of the service on the day of inspection.

### Supporting relationships around children

- Throughout the care rooms in the service the practitioners practice supported children's sense of belonging and connectedness. Staff members demonstrated knowledge about children's preferences, likes and dislikes and incorporated this information into planning of activities. Two children were transitioning from the Baby /Wobbler room to the Toddler room, and staff were observed to demonstrate awareness around their adaption to their new routine.
- The practitioners acted as positive role models for the children and used gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings such as taking turns with toys. Practitioners were observed to promote positive behaviour, with praise given for positive behaviour interactions.
- A welcoming atmosphere was evident in the service with practitioners warmly greeting children, their parents and guardians in a friendly manner on their arrival to the service. Parents and guardians were provided with the opportunity to exchange information about their children with the practitioners at drop off and collection. The practice observed was in keeping with the services partnership with parents/guardians' policy.
- Throughout all the care rooms in the service the practitioners were observed to be very familiar with the children and spoke about the children positively, the children were observed to be comfortable in their

environment and sought out staff members with comfort and ease. The practitioners were observed to be willing play partners with the children and followed the children's interests in their chosen activities

### Physical and material environment:

- In each care room play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play.
- The Baby/Wobbler room provided clear floor space for children to lie, roll, sit, crawl and walk. Push-along toys and stable props were available to support the children to engage in physical and gross motor activity through self-initiated movement.
- The five care rooms were laid out in designated areas of interest including well-resourced home corners with dress up costumes on rails, construction areas, arts and crafts areas, and rest areas equipped with soft matting and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if required. Age-appropriate play equipment to support the development of the children's fine motor skills were provided in the care rooms. These included jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, shape sorters, magnets, interlocking plastic toys, stacking toys, threading equipment and peg boards. A range on specialist Montessori equipment was provided in ECCE room 1.
- Sensory play experiences were facilitated in each care room and the children attending the Baby/Wobbler room were observed to enjoy playing with dried pasta on the day of inspection and the Children in the Toddler room played with rice, wooden spoons and bowls. The practitioners discussed that sensorial opportunities are changed regularly to include play dough, gloop, sand and water play. Sand tables were also provided in the outdoor play areas.
- A plentiful supply of books was provided in the care rooms and the children's language development was facilitated in each room through conversation, storytelling and singing.
- An enclosed outdoor area with a rigid plastic roof was located to the side of the service which enabled the children to have time outside regardless of the weather. The area was surfaced with artificial grass with a range of play opportunities including ride on and push along toys, a playhouse, a wooden platform with steps and a crawling tunnel beneath were available along with a play kitchen and a range of transport toys for the children to use. A large outdoor area was located to the rear of the service with 3 separate play areas provided, each area had a climbing frame with steps and a slide attached to promote and support the children's gross motor play experiences along with play kitchens and wall mounted blackboards for

the children to use. The areas also provided the children with the opportunity for running and free movement.

### 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 premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children.
- The play equipment and toys used by the children were observed in good repair.
- Cleaning agents were observed to be stored out of children's reach.

##### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running water, liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated bins were provided for hand washing purposes.
- Individually labelled containers were provided for the storage of children's soothers.

##### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

##### Safe Sleep:

- Sleep check records were available for review for all sleeping children, which were recorded every 10 mins and detailed the child's skin colour, breathing pattern and sleeping position and the room temperature, with staff signatures.
- The sleep room temperatures were maintained in line with safe sleep guidelines for the age of children in each sleep room on the day of inspection. The temperature of the cot room was recorded at 21°C at 12.10pm whilst 9 children from the Toddler room slept. The temperature of the ECCE 2 room where 17 children slept was recorded at 21.3°C at 12.15pm.

##### Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Infection Control:

Infection control measures were not always followed. The possible risk of the spread of infection was increased due to the following:

- The children attending the Baby/Wobbler room did not have their hands washed before they had their morning snack.
- The nappy changing mat was not cleaned using disinfectant in between nappy changing of children in the Toddler room.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

#### Infection Control:

Staff were reminded that all babies' hands must be washed or cleaned appropriately before snacks/mealtimes in line with infection control procedures. Daily Routines were reviewed to ensure that hand washing takes place before snack time. Staff were reminded that the nappy changing mat must be cleaned and disinfected after **each** nappy change.

#### Preventive Action

#### Infection Control:

Visual reminders are displayed in the room and nappy changing area. Hand washing and nappy changing procedures are reinforced during daily handovers. Ongoing monitoring and spot checks will be carried out by management.

### Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23– Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

### 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 details of the attendance of one child had not been accurately recorded in the attendance book in the ECCE 3 room. A child who was present on the day was not recorded as present from 9.05am until 12.05pm. It is acknowledged that this was rectified in the afternoon on review of the attendance book at 1.55pm. Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children in an emergency.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective Action

(1) Staff were reminded immediately that children must be signed in at the time of arrival in line with attendance and record requirements. The importance of accurate and timely completion of the attendance register was reinforced with staff.

### **Preventive Action**

(1) Attendance procedures are now reinforced during daily handovers. Management will carry out regular checks of the attendance register throughout the day. Ongoing monitoring will take place to ensure compliance with arrival and departure procedures.

### **Summary Comment**

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance has been reviewed and accepted.

## 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times, this was evidenced by four staff FAR certificates on file.

(2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations throughout the service and available at all times.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
  - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

#### Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 18/12/2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 03/03/2025 and the smoke detection system on 25/11/2025.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

- A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

#### Compliance Information

- (c) The ambient air temperature in all of the 5 care rooms in the service were maintained between 18°C to 22°C on the day of inspection.