

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019WH001SA
Name of School Age Service:	Athlone Little Scholars Limited
Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre Healy
Address of School Age Service:	St. Ciaran's National School, Twyford, Baylin, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.
Eircode:	N37 AH98

Date(s) of Inspection:	9 September 2024
Number of school age children present during inspection:	PM 54
Registration status:	Registered
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell
Title:	Early years inspector

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

Authority to Inspect

Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:

Athlone Little Scholars is based in a school in a rural area of Co Westmeath. The service operates from three of the classrooms within the school complex. There is access to a small kitchen area and sanitary facilities. The children have access to an outdoor area on the premises. A service is provided for children aged 4 to 12 years old. The service operates a breakfast club from 8.15 to 9.15am and an afterschool from 2 to 6.00pm Monday to Friday during term time.

Staffing:

The registered provider works in the service. There are six staff members employed to work directly with the children.

Additional Information:

The inspector conducted a planned focused inspection of the service.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, registered provider, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in:

- Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures;
- Regulation 9(1)(2)(4): Staffing levels;
- Regulation 12: Insurance;

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be non-compliant in:

- Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency.

Conclusion and follow-up actions:

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their preventive and corrective action plan, have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.

(2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The staff files of the registered provider and six staff members were reviewed. There were seven Garda Vetting disclosures available. The registered provider had obtained two references for all staff members and themselves from either a previous employer or a source other than a previous employer. These references were validated as required. The documentation reviewed provided evidence that police vetting was not required for any staff member. The procedures for vetting staff members were completed prior to any staff member commencing employment and working directly with the children.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- (4) A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(2)(4)

There were 7 staff members working with 54 children on the day of inspection. Appropriate supervision was observed throughout the afternoon and included small groups of children playing with staff on the field. Staff members also supported children with their homework whilst they were given fruit as a snack.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service was insured from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025 for a maximum of 72 children. On the day of the inspection, there were 54 children in attendance.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement not met

1. The registered provider had not ensured Garda Vetting disclosures were updated every three years in adherence with the Renewal of Garda Vetting regulatory notice. There were seven Garda Vetting disclosures in place, however one of these had not been updated in the last three years.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

1. The registered provider submitted the renewed Garda vetting disclosure. The registered provider stated that a checking system is in place ensure that Garda Vetting disclosures are in date at all times.

Summary of Findings

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their preventive and corrective action plan, have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.