

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020DR002
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Name of Service:	The Little School
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Address of Service:	The Calf House, Airfield Estate, Overend Way, Dundrum, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D14 EE77
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Marie Keown
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Service type:	Full Day
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Dates of Inspection:	21/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	48	PM	21
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Quigley and H. Sutherland
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 Little School is located on the grounds of the Airfield Estate in Dundrum, South County Dublin. Full day, part time, and sessional care and education are provided to children aged 2 years 8 months to 6 years. The service operates from 8:00 to 18:00 each weekday. The service also provides a school aged childcare facility within the early years service. The Little School operates from two purposely adapted single storey premises within the Airfield Estate, one building consists of one large care room, a smaller care room, a kitchen area and sanitary accommodation. The second building consists of a large care room and reception area, an office, and sanitary accommodation. The service has developed a designated and secure outdoor play area in a courtyard between the two preschool buildings.

Staffing

The service currently employs 13 staff members including the registered provider who works directly in the service. On the day of inspection, 11 adults were present including the registered provider, a cook, and an adult who works in an administrative role.

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/ information and records/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Lisa's Room and Geraldine's Room.

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

This inspection was triggered by the receipt of information which was furnished to the Early Years Inspectorate on the 8 January 2026.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.*
- (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.*
- (7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:*
- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*
 - (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*
 - (c) these Regulations.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and two named persons to deputise if required.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and the persons appointed to deputise were on the premises during the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service which was confirmed with staff members during discussions with the inspectors.

Following a discussion with the registered provider it was confirmed that 6 adults had commenced working in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on the 19 March 2024. Documentation required under Regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of these 6 adults as detailed below.

- (2)
- (a) (b) There were 2 references each available for 5 of the adults which had been appropriately verified.
 - (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 for all adults employed.
 - (d) Six of the adults required international police vetting, the required documentation was available for each of the adults.
- (4) Five of the adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. One of the adults did not require a qualification.
- (7) The registered provider demonstrated that they had taken reasonable measures to ensure that all employees were appropriately supervised and provided with sufficient information and training to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with the regulations as follows;
- During discussions with the inspectors and observations of practice during the inspection, staff members demonstrated an awareness of the policies and associated procedures in place in the service.
 - Documentation reviewed evidenced that regular team meetings were in place in the service.
 - Documentation reviewed and discussions with staff members evidenced that regular training and upskilling opportunities were offered to staff members by the registered provider.
 - Documentation reviewed evidenced that all adults employed to work in the service had engaged in Children 1st training in line with the Children First Act 2015.
 - Evidence was available to show that staff members had received formal induction training when they commenced employment. There were detailed records of this induction training available which included training on the policies, procedures and associated practices in place in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) There were no written references available for one staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) Two written references were obtained and verified by the registered provider. A recruitment checklist is now in place to ensure compliance with the regulatory requirements.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

For the purpose of this inspection, Regulation 10 was limited to an assessment of the behaviour management policy in place in the service. Although it is acknowledged that the policy and associated procedures were in place, it did not detail all of the necessary information as follows:

- The behaviour management policy in place in the service did not detail that the procedures for the protection and welfare of children were managed in line with the safeguarding statement in place in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The behaviour management policy has been updated to include the necessary information.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the day of inspection. There were 8 adults working directly with 48 children on the morning of inspection.

(2) At all times the minimum required ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (k) A review of documentation evidenced that records were maintained in the service of any accident or incident involving a pre-school child.

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.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

The inspectors observed appropriate care practices in place in the service during the inspection.

Staff members reported that lunch is provided daily by the parents or guardians of the children in attendance with the exception of one care room where children attend longer hours. A hot dinner was provided by the service for children attending on a full day care basis. Drinks were accessible to the children in the care rooms at all times. Children were encouraged to assist in the preparation for lunch time, handing out lunch boxes and drinks to their peers. Staff members sat with the children and engaged in conversation during mealtime.

Children all accessed the toilet independently during the inspection and staff supported younger children where required. Staff demonstrated kindness and warmth during interactions observed by the inspectors and were engaged with the children throughout the inspection. Comfort was offered to children promptly when required. The children appeared happy and content at their play and Montessori based activities throughout the inspection.

Staff supported the children to wash their hands and clean their noses at appropriate times during the inspection. Children were encouraged to take turns assisting with tasks in the care rooms such as sweeping floors and wiping tables to promote independence. Rest areas were available so the children could take time away from the group or rest if required. Staff were observed supporting the children, offering reassurance and praise during play and Montessori activities and used prompts to extend and enhance play and learning. Behaviours were managed in line with the policy in place in the service and staff were observed encouraging conflict resolution and intervening early in minor disputes, using positive reinforcement.

(2)

No incidents of corporal punishment were observed during the inspection and staff members stated that such practices are prohibited in the service.

(3)

On the day of inspection, the inspectors did not observe any care practices that were harmful to children. The behaviour management policy in place stipulated that such practices are prohibited in the service, this was verified during discussions with staff members on the day of inspection.

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:

Steps were implemented to ensure the safety of the children. The entry and exit points were secured to prevent children from leaving the service unattended or unauthorised individuals from gaining access. The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Potentially hazardous materials such as cleaning products and medicines were safely stored out of children's reach. There were no hazards identified in the indoor or outdoor environments.

Infection Control:

Measures were taken to minimise the risk of infection spreading. Waste was managed appropriately using pedal-operated bins. Staff were aware of guidelines on exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses. Warm water, soap and paper towels were available for handwashing and children washed their hands at regular intervals and as required. Cleaning schedules were in place and maintained in the care rooms and sanitary areas.

Administration of Medication:

Medications were stored in their original packaging out of reach of children. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of procedures to safeguard children when administering medicine. This included ensuring written consent was obtained from parents or guardians, having a second staff member present as a witness during administration, and maintaining detailed records shared with parents or guardians upon collection. Care plans were available for children who required emergency medication and staff members detailed the steps in these plans during discussions with the inspectors.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.
- (5) The requirement in paragraph (4) is without prejudice to any requirement to retain the record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) under any other enactment or rule of law.

Compliance Information

- (1) A complaints policy was in place in the service and adequately outlined the following;
- (a) Details of the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service.
 - (b) Details of the manner by which a complaint will be dealt with by the service.
 - (c) Details of the procedures in place outlining how the person who makes such a complaint in relation to the service will be informed of the manner by which the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2)
- (a) (b)
A record was available in the service of a complaint which had been made. The person in charge detailed the procedures in place in the service for dealing with complaints, including maintaining a record in writing, as per the complaints policy in place. The person in charge and the registered provider stated that the complaint was being dealt with in accordance with the complaints policy in place.

(3)

(a) (b)

The person in charge stated they are aware of their obligation to detail the nature of any complaint made and the manner in which it will be dealt with. The person in charge stated a record of any complaint made will be kept in the service and available for inspection on the premises.

(4)(5)

The person in charge in the service stated during discussions with the inspectors that all records relating to any child and family who have attended the service are retained for the required period of time, including any complaints made.