

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021KE011SA
Name of School Age Service:	Little Scholars
Name of Registered Provider:	Una Dunne
Address of School Age Service:	Unit 2 Dowlings carpark, Prosperous, Naas, Co Kildare.
Eircode:	W91 VC43

Date of Inspection:	2 July 2024
Number of school age children present during inspection:	PM 13
Registration status:	Registered
Conditions (if applicable):	N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Saint John's Road West, Dublin 8. D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw M. McDonnell
Title:	Early years inspectors

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).

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Description of Service:

Little Scholars is based in Prosperous, Co Kildare. It is based in a purposely adapted commercial premises. There are two care rooms for the school age children. On the day of the inspection, only one room was in operation.

The service is registered to accommodate up to 36 children from the ages of 4 up to 12 years old. On the day of the inspection, there were 13 school age children present.

The service is registered to operate from 7.30am to 9.00am and 1.30pm to 6.30pm. Outside of the school term, the service operates between 7.30am and 6.30pm. The children have access to an outdoor area at the side of the premises.

There is a registered pre-school service in operation on site also.

Staffing:

Seven staff members are employed in the school age service including the manager and relief staff. The registered provider does not work directly with the children but is available for support if required. On the day of the inspection, there were 5 staff members caring for 13 children.

Additional Information:

The inspection was completed as a result of information received on the receipt of a feedback and concern received by the Inspectorate.

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:

- a) caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- b) 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
- c) 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 8(1)(a)(b)(c)(d): Vetting disclosures;
- Regulation 9(1)(2)(4): Staffing levels;
- Regulation 10: Policies etc. of a school age service;
- Regulation 12: Insurance;
- Regulation 13: Complaints(1)(a)(b)(c);
- Childcare Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

On inspection, the registered provider was found to be non-compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 8(2): Vetting disclosures.

Conclusion and follow-up actions: The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan, have adequately addressed the non-compliance 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

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)

The inspector reviewed seven staff files. Ten validated written references from past employers, and four from reputable sources were available. Seven Garda vetting disclosures were on file. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. The documentation reviewed demonstrated that police vetting was not required for the staff members.

Regulatory Requirement not met

(2)

Evidence reviewed demonstrated that relevant vetting disclosure procedures had not been carried out before staff members worked directly with the children. The start dates submitted to the inspector for two staff members were dates prior the date on the Garda vetting disclosures.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)

The registered provider stated that previous to this inspection staff members had no unsupervised direct contact with children until the vetting disclosures were complete. However, the registered provider has reviewed and updated the services induction policy to demonstrate that staff inductions will not take place until the new staff member vetting disclosures have been received. A copy of the updated policy was submitted to the inspector as evidence.

(2)

The registered provider has stated that going forward all vetting disclosure will be in place before a staff member is employed. A copy of the amended recruitment policy was submitted to the inspector.

Summary of Findings

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan, have adequately addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection and will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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)

The registered provider ensured that appropriate staffing levels were maintained during the inspection. The 13 children attending the service were supervised directly by 5 adults. Discussion with staff members and a review of the staff and children's attendance records from 6 June 2024 to 2 July 2024 demonstrated the minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children was maintained during this period.

During the inspection, staff members were observed supervising the children. Staff members were positioned in the outdoor area to ensure they could engage with the children. One staff member played a ball game with the children in the ball area, while another staff member engaged with the children by blowing bubbles and catching them. A third member of staff was available to meet and greet parents at the entrance gate.

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the policies and statements specified in Schedule 6 are in place for the service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The inspector reviewed the service's complaints policy, behaviour management policy, and dropping off and collection of children policy. The policies contained information as per Schedule 6 of the regulations to support staff in their practice.

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 85 children in total which included 36 school age children.

Regulation 13: Complaints

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The complaints policy detailed the procedure for making a complaint and how verbal and written complaints would be dealt with. There was an informal, formal, and escalation process documented in the policy. The policy referenced how a complainant would be kept informed of the complaints procedure and the appeals process. On the day of the inspection, staff members informed the inspector that there were no written complaints received.

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 Met

During the inspection, the inspector observed the health, safety and welfare of children being supported by the following:

- The main door was secure on the inspector's arrival and there was a coded keypad for entry to the care rooms.
- Staff described their communication with parents as informal, and positive. The staff stated they give verbal feedback to the parents but if there was an issue, the manager or registered provider was always available to converse with parents too. This partnership with parents was included in documentation reviewed by the inspector.
- A copy of the Parent handbook was available at the front entrance of the building for the parents to access. This handbook included the following: the ethos of the service, staff: child ratio, the collection and drop off policy, the staff-child interaction policy, the behaviour management policy, the complaints policy, the accident and incident policy and a missing child policy.
- The management and staff members confirmed that the policy and procedure document was in the office. There was a copy in each care room also.

- During discussions with staff, they outlined a structured induction process for new staff members and ongoing training and support for all staff. A staff member stated that all staff received a copy of the service policies and procedures, including the code of behaviour. Staff described that for the first few weeks of employment, they shadow an experienced staff member and are mentored by this person. This was evidenced by induction and training attendance sheets that were signed by staff members, minutes of staff meetings, and internal staff updates sent via an internal messaging system.
- Three children arrived at the service having been collected from a local summer camp by a staff member. The staff described how parents were requested to book their children's hours of attendance before the summer holidays and if there was a change in this arrangement parents were requested to contact the service daily. During discussions with the children, they confirmed that the staff member has a list of children to be collected from school. The children also stated that their parents had to send a text message to the service if there were any changes to arrangements.
- Staff described how the service's drop-off and collection policy had been reviewed and updated after a recent incident where a child was not collected from school by the service. Staff described the updated process of two-way communication between the service and the parents, as there was a previous miscommunication between the parents and the service. This detail was in line with the written policies reviewed.
- During discussions with the staff, they described how they managed difficult behaviour in the service. They were cognisant that children may have had an upsetting day in school and might need some time away from the larger group of children. They described how they can facilitate this in the room and how they sometimes just sit with a child until they feel better. They gave an example of how football games can become contentious, particularly with older children who the staff members described as competitive. They described how they encouraged children to develop their own rules, actively supporting them to solve their differences. This strategy was reflected in the policy of the service.

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- On the day of the inspection, the school age children were observed to play in the outdoor area. During a discussion with the children, they explained they could choose whether to join organised activities or play their own game. The equipment and materials available to them in the garden were age and stage appropriate. There was a large climbing apparatus, a playhouse, a balancing obstacle course and a wooden den under the tree house.
- The inspector reviewed a sample of incident records, and all five forms were signed by a staff member and a parent.