

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022LH001
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Name of Service:	Little Mochtas
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Address of Service:	Louth Primary School, Louth Village, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 AE79
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Name of Registered Provider:	Danille McGinty
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	12/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & S. Skinnader
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

Little Mochtás is a privately owned service that has been in operation from its current location since September 2024. This service provides sessional, part-time, and full day care and education to pre-school children aged 15 months - 6 years. The service operates from 08.00am – 6.00pm Monday to Thursday and from 08.00am – 3.00pm on Fridays. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 44 preschool children.

The premises consists of a single storey modular building with 2 specifically developed playrooms, namely Room 1 and Room 2 and is located on the grounds of St. Mochtás primary school in Louth Village. Ancillary accommodation consists of sanitary areas, storage, a kitchen area and office space. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are 11 staff employed in this service, including the registered provider who work directly with the preschool children.

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.

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, 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge who is also the registered provider and a named deputy person to deputise as required. Both were on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.20am and were present for the duration of the inspection.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2) Eleven staff files were reviewed including; the registered provider and 10 childcare staff

The following was observed:

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 9 members of staff of which 12 were validated as required.
- One staff member had one written reference available.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for each of the 11 members of staff. The service also adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for all 3 staff who had resided outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 8 out of 11 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification

Non-Compliance Information

The following documents were not available and were not in place prior to the staff member commencing in the service;

(2)(a)(b) One staff member did not have 2 written and validated references available.

One staff member did not have a 2nd written and validated reference available.

Seven written references available were not validated.

(3) From the documentary evidence available for inspection 4 staff members had commenced working in the service prior to Garda Vetting being obtained.

(4) Sufficient documentary evidence was not available to demonstrate that 3 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) All staff files have been updated and currently have evidence of validated references.

The registered provider has purchased the references check sheet and will utilise this document, going forward for any new staff members.

(3) All staff to have Garda vetting on file which will be obtained and complete before staff commence.

Staff are not permitted to commence employment until their Garda clearance has been obtained.

(4) The staff members qualification was sent before close of business on the date of inspection, the registered provider has also attached another employee's qualification which demonstrate a minimum level 5. The third staff members qualification has been sent to the governing body for additional assessment.

All staff files to be complete before staff member commences employment

Supporting documentation submitted

- Documentary evidence of written reference and confirmation that all references have been validated.
- Documentary evidence of minimum level 5 childcare qualification for 2 staff members.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 (2)(a)(b) and (3) have been addressed.

However, while documentary evidence of the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification has been received for 2 staff, evidence that the qualification for 1 staff member meets the regulatory requirement has not been received to date. As such Regulation 9 (4) has not been adequately addressed.

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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2) On the day of inspection there were 2 preschool rooms in operation namely Rooms 1 & 2.

The following adult to child ratios were observed when the Inspectors arrived unannounced to the service;

- **Room 1-** When the inspectors arrived at the premises the children and staff in Room 1 were off site attending a 'Teddy bear Club' in the school activities hall. When they returned to the service at 11.20am there were 12 preschool children aged 1 year 5 months to 2 years with 4 members of staff.
- **Room 2-** There were 17 preschool children aged 3 - 4 years with 2 members of staff.

The registered provider was also present in the service and was engaged in administrative duties and also provided assistance and relief in the care rooms as required.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children’s attendance records the information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises.

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:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) Three staff members did not have a Curriculum Vitae available for inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a) All staff files have a curriculum vitae attached to their folders.

A checklist will be utilised to ensure that all documents are present in files at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of curriculum vitae

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 have been adequately addressed.

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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children’s learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs:

- Healthy eating was promoted in the service as was evidenced by the dinner and snacks provided by the service. All hot meals are provided by an external catering company and reheated by the service. On the day of the inspection the lunch time dinner provided at 12.00pm was observed to consist of broccoli casserole with mash potato and gravy. Breakfast was reported to consist of breakfast cereal and was also provided by the service between 8 and 9am. Some children brought in their own snacks, and these were stored appropriately in the service. A variety of fresh fruit, rice cakes and yoghurts were provided for snack time. In Room 1, two children who requested extra dinner were provided with extra portions. An afternoon snack was served at approximately 2.45pm.
- Potable drinking water was available for the children to access as required in all rooms. Independence with feeding was promoted and staff provided support to the younger children.
- In Room 1, individual child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the children’s routines.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff. Throughout the service the children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing interactions by all staff.
- In Room 2 transitions were swift and behavioural issues were not allowed to escalate.

Supporting Relationships

- The staff when questioned stated that they use an electronic interactive communication system to record and share information about the children’s daily activities and care needs with parents. Pictures of activities, games, curriculum plans, and the childrens’ learning journey are also shared through this ‘app’. Partnership with parents is also supported through verbal communication at drop off and collection and a parental messaging group. The staff have a communication group where they share information through a messaging service. The staff also report regular staff meetings in the service.

- A key worker system was in place throughout the service and the names of the children, and their key worker were on display in both care rooms. The staff when questioned were familiar with their allocated key children and this promoted the development and sustainment of relationships between the children, their parents, and the staff in the service.
- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children in both rooms. For example, *“Good girl.... What do we say to our helper...Thank you!” “Good girl”* and *“well done”*
- The staff were observed down on the floor with the children in Room 1 and to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner reading stories and singing songs. One child was observed to fall asleep in the staff members arms during puppet and story time and was promptly put down to sleep. Similarly, in Room 2 the staff were seated at the tables with the children and were observed actively engaging with and positively supporting the children with their activities for example *“let’s see it...oh that’s gorgeous”*, *“your dad is going to love it”* and *“oh thank you for tidying up”*.

Physical and Material Environment

- Adequate child sized furniture and equipment was in use throughout the service.
- A variety of age-appropriate materials and equipment were available in both care rooms that support many areas of development such as fine motor and gross motor skills, role play, speech and language and sensory development.
- Toys and equipment were positioned on open low-level shelving in both rooms which promoted independence and facilitated choice for the children. The toys were stored in clear boxes/baskets that were also labelled so that the children could identify the toys contained within and then select their chosen toy of interest.
- Staff were observant and assisted children in accessing particular equipment for example the tray top activity set up in Room 2.

Programme of Activities:

- A daily routine for each room was on display.
- A variety of the children’s art activities were on display throughout the service which included; ‘cotton wool cloud and raindrops’, handprint birthday balloons, love heart paper plates and Valentines cards. These reflected the thematic curriculum plans that were on display in the rooms and there was evidence of emergent interests on display in both rooms.

- Folders were available for each child and these included samples of the children’s artwork.
- The children were observed to engage in a variety of activities that promoted many areas of development including; sensory play, table-top activities, art activities, large group activities and story time.

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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or

shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft seating, mats and cushions provided, should a child need to rest or take a break from activities during the day
- An area of Room 1 was sectioned off with mobile gates and used as a designated sleep area. A number of individual day mats suitable for children aged over 2 years were available.
- Two cot beds were observed in use for 2 children aged under 2 years.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) One child aged under 2 years was observed sleeping on a floor mat. This is not considered suitable for a child under 2 years to use for sleep.

(2)(a) The children attending the service did not have access to a suitable outdoor space on the day of the inspection as one area was out of use due to recent storm damage and the second area was also in poor condition. The artificial surface was ‘bumpy’ and a potential trip hazard and the sides of the area were sloped and muddy and a potential slip hazard.

It is acknowledged that the children attending Room 1 did have a change of environment to the ‘Teddy bear club’ in the activities hall of the primary school.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b) In order to provide better support to the children's sleep and rest routine the registered provider has purchased an additional floor bed that is suitable for under 2-year-olds.

This additional bed has been purchased, should the need for it arise.

(2)(a) Outdoor area has since been cleared of fallen tree and branches.

Outdoors has been cleared and is checked daily, this is documented on the outdoor checklist. Resources belonging to the preschool next door have been sent back and the area with has been furnished with a Mud kitchen furniture , slide and play house from the Service.

The registered provider has works scheduled to include an outdoor matted area that is fully sheltered, this has been designed to support the children to have access to outdoor play all year round. This is due to be completed in the coming weeks.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of outdoor area and daily checklist.

Photographic evidence of floor bed suitable for use by children aged 15months -2 years.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 20 have been addressed. This will require assessment at the next 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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access to the building and to prevent children exiting the service unsupervised.
- Designated emergency exit doors remained clear and free from obstruction.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, hand soap, paper towels and pedal bins were provided for in each sanitary area.
- The service had a procedure in place for children's soothers, which were observed to be stored individually in labelled containers.
- Daily and weekly cleaning records were on display and completed up to date.
- Pedal operated waste bins were observed in use and were appropriately maintained on the day of the inspection.
- Care rooms and sanitary areas were ventilated through the means of mechanical ventilation and openable windows.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep records were maintained for each sleeping child, which recorded the breathing pattern, sleeping position and colour of sleeping children at 10-minute intervals. The room temperature was also recorded.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that all reasonable measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a preschool child in relation to the following:

Infection Control:

The following cross infection risks were observed during the inspection:

1. Not all of the children's hands were washed on return to the care room from the 'Teddy bear Club' in the activities hall of the primary school. On return, some of the children were observed to engage in play with playdough and connector toys without having washed their hands.
2. The sleep mats with sheets attached were stored on top of each other which is a cross-infection risk.
3. Mouthed toys were not removed for washing after use.

General Safety:

4. A number of sharp corners on low-level storage units were exposed in both care rooms. This is a potential injury risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence .

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will require assessment at the next inspection.

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) The registered provider ensured that there was a person trained as a First Aid Responder (FAR) at all times in the service. This was evidenced by the availability of up to date FAR certificates for 4 staff.

(2)(a) and (b) There was an adequately stocked first aid box in the service available at all times which was stored in a conspicuous location.