

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022MH003
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Name of Service:	Bettystown's Little Stars
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Address of Service:	The Whitefield Hall, Bettystown, Co. Meath
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Name of Registered Provider:	Katarzyna Wlodarska
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	42
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna & M Mc Donnell
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

Bettystown Little Stars is one of seven early years services owned and operated by the registered provider, all located in Dublin, Kildare, and Meath. Bettystown's Little Stars provides full day, part-time and sessional care to children from 0 – 6 years of age from a purpose-built premises located in a housing estate in Bettystown in Co Meath. The service provides care for up to 64 pre-school children at any one time, operating from 7am to 6pm daily. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children from 9am to 12 midday daily. There are 5 care rooms provided in the premises, namely Tiny Stars room, Twinkle Stars room, Shining Stars room, Shooting Stars room and the Raising Stars room. A sleep room is accessed from the adjoining corridor and from the Twinkle Stars room. Two fully enclosed outdoor play areas are provided to the side and rear of the premises. Car parking is provided to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 19 staff members to include the registered provider, one area manager and a service manager. Fifteen staff are employed to work directly with the children, and one staff member is employed as the service cook.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 28 Insurance.

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

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider on 15th July 2025 due to elevated ambient air temperatures which exceeded the recommended sleep room temperatures of 16-18°C and 18-22°C in the rooms where children slept. The area manager provided the inspectorate with written assurances within 24 hours, on the 16th of July 2025 of appropriate preventive actions being implemented in the service to reduce the likelihood of the exceeded room temperatures reoccurring.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the area manager, service manager, 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 who is the service manager and named persons to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge and review of the staff roster, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or a named person in charge were on the premises.

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

(2) The files for 19 staff were reviewed.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references were on file for 19 adults.

A total of 27 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

A total of 11 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 19 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for 19 staff, demonstrated that 9 adults had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the 9 staff was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 18 staff employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for the cook was not required.

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 adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at maximum attendance

Two adults cared for 5 children aged 11 months to 1 year 6 months in Tiny Stars, of whom all attended on a part time or full day care basis.

Three adults cared for 10 children aged 1 year 4 months to 2 years 2 months in Twinkle Stars, of whom all attended on part time or full day care basis.

Two adults cared for 10 children aged 2 years 8 months to 3 years 6 months in Shining Stars, of whom all attended on part time or full day care basis.

One adult cared for 5 children aged 3 years 5 months to 3 years 11 months in Shooting Stars, of whom all attended on part time or full day care basis.

Two adults cared for 14 children aged 4 years to 5 years 1 month in Raising Stars, of whom all attended on part time or full day care basis.

In addition to the above the service manager covered staff lunches. The area manager arrived following the inspectors arrival and remained on site for the remainder of the inspection, assisting in care rooms where required.

(8) A review of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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

(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.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

A 3-week menu was on display detailing all snacks and meals that children availed of while in the service. The hot meal served to children in attendance on a part time or full-time basis was potatoes, ham, vegetables and gravy.

Snack and meal times were observed to be unrushed, and staff were observed to sit with the children and provide supports where needed, while also encouraging younger children to self-feed where they were able. A nursing chair in the Tiny Stars room provided an area for staff to sit with and feed young babies.

The children had access to their drinks during the day in each care room and were observed to request their drinks with staff also reminding children to drink as it was a warm day.

Nappy changing practises were carried out at set times and where required in line with the child's daily routine.

During these times the staff were observed to engage in songs and conversation with the children. Older children that could use the toilet did so independently with staff remaining close by for supports where needed.

Children's appearances were cared for, where their clothing became soiled the staff were observed to change the clothing promptly, and each child had spare clothing available in the service. Bibs were used for meal times for younger children and staff were observed to clean the faces and hands of the younger children after meal times.

The children in attendance on the day availed of one midday sleep in the cot room and designated care rooms set up for sleep times following dinner. The staff advised that where younger babies require a sleep in the morning and evening times they are placed to sleep in the cot room in line with their routine.

The children in the Shining Stars, Shooting Stars and the Raising Stars rooms were observed to experience a change of environment to the outdoor play area during the inspection.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere in each of the care rooms was warm and welcoming. The staff were observed to be consistently engaged with the children during care practises and activities throughout the inspection. The children were in the process of a transition period, moving from one care room to care another in line with their ages and stages of development. Although staff in their new rooms were new to them, the children appeared comfortable and familiar with the staff who were caring for them. The staff were also observed to have strong awareness of the children likes and dislikes such as foods, toys or songs.

Minor disagreements over turn taking and sharing occurred, where staff in the younger rooms were observed to use age-appropriate strategies such as distraction to diffuse disagreements, and the staff in the rooms with older children used age-appropriate conversations with the children to come up with solutions to the problems or disagreements together.

Communication with parents is through a digital application where the child's daily routine is recorded to include sleep, eat and toilet/nappy times, and also in person upon arrival and collection times which was observed on the day of inspection. The parents are welcomed into the care rooms, and adequate time was given to exchange information about how their child had been the previous evening and that morning.

Strong team work was evident within the service; the staff were observed to be supported by the management team in practise. The staff within each care room were observed to communicate well with each other ensuring each child's needs where met, and that transitions were smooth.

Physical And Material Environment

The care rooms were bright and welcoming, rooms were decorated with neutral colours and had an array of birthday charts, family photos and displays of themed activities and children's interests down at the children's level. Ample floor space was provided in the Tiny Stars rooms for the free movement of babies, with a spacious room and a climbing structure provided in Twinkle Stars room to allow children to engage in physical activity indoors.

Designated interest areas were provided in each of the care rooms. The areas included for example were well resourced home corners, rest areas with books, dress up clothing and role play toys, table top play equipment, sensory play materials such as playdough, wall mounted texture boards, child level mirrors, chalkboards and floor play toys. Play materials were freely available and accessible to children on low level shelves, suitable to the children attending each care room. The areas and materials available provided many opportunities for children to play, explore and engage in meaningful play experiences in their indoor environment.

Two outdoor play areas were provided, one small area for the Tiny Stars and Twinkle Stars room, and a larger area used by the Shining Stars, Shooting Stars and the Raising Stars rooms.

The small area had artificial grass surfacing. The children had access to an activity wall, outdoor kitchen and ride on toys. The larger area had artificial grass surfacing and a paved area. The children had access to a slide, a climbing structure, an outdoor kitchen and a tyre play structure. There were ride on toys such as balance bikes also available.

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

The registered provider ensured all reasonable measures were put in place to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending such as:

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. A camera intercom provided at the main entrance door which rang the appropriate care rooms had coded and release access to staff only.
- A visitor log was maintained, with inspectors requested to sign in upon arrival.
- The outdoor play areas were secured, and no hazards were observed.
- The toys and play equipment used by the children was observed to be maintained in good repair
- Risk assessments were available for review and completed up to date for indoor and outdoor play areas, and the sanitary and sleep areas.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children.
- Storage areas were secured and inaccessible to the children.
- Blind cords were secured and out of reach of children.
- Floor coverings were presented in good repair.
- Cleaning agents and materials were stored out of reach of children.
- The staff were observed to adequately supervise children both in the indoor and outdoor play environments and during sleep times.

The inspectors observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

Infection Control:

- Warm running water, liquid soap, disposable paper towels and foot operated bins were provided at each wash hand basin. Hand washing was observed in practise following nappy changing, and before snack and meal times.
- Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the services policy, therefore reducing risk of cross infection or contamination.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated through means of mechanical ventilation units.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned before and after meals and snack times.
- Cleaning schedules were available for review. Records reviewed were completed up to date. The service was presented in a clean and hygienic manner throughout.
- Children's soothers were stored in individually labelled boxes, and staff outlined the correct washing and sterilising procedures for the soothers.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep facilities provided were adequate for children aged under 2 years. One large cot room to include a total of 11 cots was available for children's use. Additional foldable cots were also available.
- Individual bed linen was provided for each child. Each cot was individually labelled and used solely for the named child.
- Sleep records available for review detailed each sleeping child's name, colour, breathing, position, room temperature and staff signature at 5–10-minute intervals.
- Children aged over 2 years slept on stackable beds in the Twinkle Stars and Shining Stars care rooms after dinner. Staff were observed to remain in the rooms with the sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drills were carried out monthly, demonstrated by records available for review. Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

1. An immediate action was issued to the registered provider regarding the ambient temperatures in the rooms where sleeping children were present, which were not maintained at 16-18°C for children aged under 1 year and 18-22°C for children aged over 1 year. These temperatures posed a risk to the safety and comfort of the children in attendance. It is acknowledged that, when asked by the inspectors, the staff members accurately described the safe air temperature range and implemented control measures seeking to achieve this by opening windows and doors where possible to enhance ventilation, in addition to using portable fans, cooling units and containers of ice.

However, although partially effective as evidenced in the temperatures recorded, these measures did not prevent the room temperatures from remaining high, as detailed in the table below.

Date	Location	Air temperature	Time recorded
15/07/2025	Cot Room (children aged under 1 year were present)	26.3°C	12:10pm
		24.9°C	1:41pm
15/07/2025	Twinkle Stars Room (children aged under 1 year were present)	25.7°C	12:20pm
		25.0°C	1:41 pm

15/07/2025	Shinning Stars Room (all children were aged 1 year and over)	26.5°C	12:20pm
		25.0°C	1:46pm

2. In the Shinning Stars room, a child aged 1 year and 11 months was observed to sleep on a stackable bed within the care room. It is acknowledged that a care plan was completed by staff and the child's parent, however the stackable bed was not suitable for a child aged 24 months and under in line with Tusla's Early Learning and Care sleep provision guidance for children under 24 months, which requires a floor bed to be fitted with a mattress of at least 6cm in thickness.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. We continued to ensure window and doors etc. were kept open at all times to create air flow through the different rooms if temperatures rise above the required temperature. We have installed air conditioning units in our sleep room, Twinkle Stars, Tiny Stars and Shining Stars to reduce the risk the risk of re occurrence.

Safe Sleep:

2. The manager and the team spoke to the family and explained the risks and the child in question has been returned to a cot to reduce any potential risk during sleep time. The manager will ensure there is no reoccurrence, and children will not have access to beds until the age of two and above. All staff have re-read the safe sleep policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Confirmation of the planned installation of air conditioning units to be carried out on 02 August 2025 along with a quotation for proposed works. Photographic evidence of the four newly installed air conditioning units.

Safe Sleep:

Photographic evidence of staff signatures (dated between 28th July to 01 August 2025) following their most recent review of the services safe sleep policy,

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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 5 staff training certificates on file.

(2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available in each of the care rooms and were stored in clearly labelled and accessible areas.

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 fire fighting 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 of the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 10 June 2025.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 16th July 2024, and the smoke alarms was dated 17th April 2025.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 64 pre-school children attending the service on a full day care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.