

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2023LH002
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Smart Start Playschool
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Ballymakenny Business Park, Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Denise Lynch
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	03/04/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	14	PM	13
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, 180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6.
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S. Cully
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

Smart Start Playschool is a privately owned service located in Co. Louth and in operation since January 2024. The service is operated from a two-storey converted building consisting of 4 care rooms, a sleep room, sanitary accommodations, a kitchen, and an office. A large enclosed outdoor space is available to the side of the building. Parking is available to the front and rear of the service. The service provides full day-care, part-time care and sessional preschool to children between the ages of 1 to 6 years. The service is also registered to provide School Age childcare. Smart Start Playschool currently operates Monday to Fridays from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 38 weeks of the year. The ECCE preschool sessions available to eligible children are from 8.30 am – 11.30 am and 12.00 pm - 3.00 pm.

### Staffing

There are currently nine members of staff employed to work in the service. Including the service manager, six staff members work directly with the children. The registered provider is present in the service on a daily basis and is available to support staff in the room if needed. Ancillary staff members include the office administrator, the cook and the caretaker.

### 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 announced and focused on the area of governance and health, welfare and development of child. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of *the registered provider, person in charge, 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) The service manager was the designated person in charge. There was a named person available to deputise as required.

(1)(b) The person in charge was present in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.10am. The Registered Provider arrived shortly thereafter and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

On the day of inspection, a total of 9 staff files and the registered provider's file were reviewed.

(2)(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references available from a past employer or from a reputable source for 9 staff members and the registered provider.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all 9 staff members and the registered provider. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting disclosures were available for 2 staff members and the registered provider who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults, according to their curriculum vitae.

(4) Seven adults whose files were reviewed, including the registered provider, worked directly with the children attending the service as evidenced by the staff roster. All held appropriate childcare qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### 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, provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

## Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the preschool service

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived announced at 10.10am and remained so throughout the inspection.

- Butterflies room: There were 8 children between the ages of 19 months – 2 years being cared for by 2 adults.
- Bumblebees room: This room was closed on the day of inspection.
- Badgers room: there were 6 children between the ages of 3 years 9 months and 2 years 11 months being cared for by 2 adults. There was also a school age child present in the service and being cared for in this room.
- Bears room: This room was closed on the day of inspection.

(8) The registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises when the service was in operation, as evidenced in the staff roster maintained in the service.

## 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*

## Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

### Basic needs:

- The staff in the service were observed to provide kind, caring and nurturing interactions to the children in their care. Staff used age-appropriate language, gentle tones of voice and spoke to younger children at

the child's level. Staff in the Butterflies room were observed spending time on the floor with young children to interact with them, play and comfort them.

- Children's individual needs were met with additional care and attention. In the Butterflies room, young children who required comfort were attended to with timely and responsive care. Staff showed awareness as to which children needed more direct support and supervision with tasks and which children were more independent encouraging them with positive feedback. The children in the Badgers room were also provided with balanced care that provided supervision but allowed for children to be independent and make choices about their day.
- Mealtimes in the service were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Staff sat at the table whilst the children ate engaging them in conversation and provided assistance to the children with eating as they required it. Children had easy access to drinking water. Children's drinking cups/bottles were stored on low level trolleys that were brought to the outdoor play area during garden time.
- The children in the Butterflies room who required a sleep were facilitated to do so in the sleep room on the first floor. The sleep room consisted of 2 standard cots for children under 24 months and stackable floor beds for children over 24 months. Each care room had adequate areas within the room where children could rest such as floor rugs, cushions, sofas or armchairs.
- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently with discreet supervision.
- The staff were alert and responsive to children's personal care needs. In the Butterflies room, staff noticed when young children needed their noses or faces wiped and ensured they were dressed appropriately for outdoor play. In the Badger room, staff reminded children to wash their hands before mealtime and reminded children where to find tissues for their nose etc.
- Children had access to a well-resourced outdoor area and availed of outdoor play on the day of the inspection.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff team were observed to communicate together respectfully throughout the inspection to support continuity of care of the children. The staff spoke about children in positive ways and demonstrated their

knowledge and understanding about children’s personalities and needs in conversation with the inspector.

- The staff displayed photographs of the children throughout the environment and displayed children’s work on the walls with care. This visual representation of children and value of their work supports children to feel a sense of identity and belonging in their care environments.
- The service showed a positive regard towards working in partnership with families Staff described how they have met with parents to plan more effective settling in periods to support children’s transition to full day care. Individual daily journals are maintained for children under 24 months and are sent home daily. For older children verbal feedback is provided to parents daily. The staff also use the creche mobile to send photographs of children engaging in planned events or activities.

### Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were bright and welcoming, and the play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children’s independent choice and play. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play materials they chose to play with.
- The furniture in each care room was age appropriate including suitable table and chairs which supports children to engage in their daily routines comfortable and independently.
- The care rooms were laid out in clearly defined interest areas to prompt and support children to engage in self-directed and creative play. Interest areas included well developed home and kitchen corners with a range of ‘real world’ equipment to promote and extend role play. Construction areas, transport toys, arts and crafts materials, musical instruments were available along with a variety of tabletop resources. The environments also contained a range of natural materials including plants and open-ended materials to encourage curiosity and exploration. There was also access to sensory materials indoors and outdoors.
- Ther outdoor area provided ample opportunity for movement, sensory play and outdoor learning. One section was covered with an impact absorbing surface and had equipment and materials available for climbing and balancing such as a metal climbing frame, a large tree branch, wooden stumps, and plastic steps. The second area was paved with concrete and partially covered with an impact absorbing surface where children could access workbenches, outdoor kitchens, a playhouse, sand/water trays and child-sized seating areas.