

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025OY002
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Name of Service:	Little Minds
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Address of Service:	Melrose, Ballynatum, Edenderry, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R45 FK51
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Name of Registered Provider:	Regina McNamara
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	16/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
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Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan
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Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.
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Description of service

Little Minds provides full day and part time childcare and education for children aged 1 to 6 years of age.

The hours of operation are between 8:00am - 17:30 hours Monday - Friday.

The premises is located in a converted building beside the registered providers own home on the outskirts of Edenderry, Co. Offaly. The accommodation consists of two pre-school rooms with adjoining sanitary facilities and a sleep room. A secured and enclosed outdoor area is available at the side of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider was working in the service on the day of the inspection with the person in charge. Both have completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education as per the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

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, staff member 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,*

(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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
- The two staff records were reviewed.
- (2)
- (a) Two written and verified past employer references were available in respect of two adults and one written and verified past employer reference was available in respect of one adult whose records were reviewed.
- (b) Two written and verified references from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of two adults whose records were reviewed.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for two adults whose records were reviewed.
- (d) Not applicable, as no adult had resided outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) Two adults employed and working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher.

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) There were sixteen children attending the service and they were supervised directly by two adults.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

(8)(a) There were two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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

Basic needs of children:

(1)(a) The service promoted a healthy eating policy. The children bring their snacks which were stored in the fridge. Hot meals were provided by an external catering company and then reheated in the service. Water was freely available and offered to the younger children. The older children were able to self-service.

Nappy changing was completed regularly and promptly when required. It was handled in a sensitive and positive manner. Independence was encouraged with children who were toilet trained however the staff members maintained supervision in case any assistance was needed.

The individual sleep needs of the children were met, and they were provided with as much time as they needed to sleep. Three cots and four level beds with individual bed linen were available for any child requiring sleep. Comfortable rest areas were available in the two care rooms.

The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. Children were spoken to in a kind and respectful manner. Their first names were used; appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones were observed being used during all interactions.

Supporting relationships around children:

Adults were observed being respectful, gentle and kind towards the children in their care and each child was listened to and given time to chat and express their thoughts and feelings.

There is an open-door policy for parents. Information was shared with parents and guardians at the drop off and collection times.

Face to face meetings can be arranged for parents/guardians as necessary, email and telephone contact are also used as alternative methods of communication.

Physical and material environment:

The physical and material environments in the care rooms were comfortable, inviting and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children. Defined areas of interest were observed. These included a library and rest area combined, a home corner, area with blocks, magnets, connecting toys, peg boards, puzzles and jigsaws, a construction area, small world toys and materials, mark making materials, arts and crafts, musical instruments, Montessori equipment and playdough on the day of the inspection.

All equipment and materials were accessible to the children and grouped to encourage children to use them independently. Low level chairs and tables were available to the children for meals and tabletop activities.

The secured outdoor area was located at the side of the premises. Equipment included sand / water trays with associative equipment to enable children to extend their play, three playhouses, a mud kitchen, climbing frames for the various ages, tricycles and push along toy. A covered area was available to the children to use in the event of inclement weather.

Programme of activities:

On the day of the inspection, the children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage with. The staff members supported the children with their activities and did not interfere in the play. The routine was child led and responsive to the children's interests.