

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY063
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Name of Service:	Little Learners Dublin Adult Learning Centre
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Address of Service:	3 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D01 H426
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Maher
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	24/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin.
Inspection undertaken by:	N McEndoo
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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).

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Description of service

Little Learners is a community service which operates from two care rooms on the ground floor of an adult education centre located in Dublin 1. The service provides a sessional and part time service to children aged from 1 to 5 years from 8:30am to 1:30pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The two care rooms; Junior room and Preschool room have access to an enclosed and sheltered outdoor area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The service employs six staff to include the person in charge, and four childcare staff and one adult employed by an external organisation to provide further support to children. On the day of inspection there were five childcare staff including the person in charge caring for 11 children, aged from 1 to 5 years of age.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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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*

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(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)

The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was 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.

(2)

On the day of inspection, five adults were present, which included the person in charge and four adults who were employed to work directly with the children. The files for 6 staff was reviewed.

The following vetting information was available for five adults:

- (a) Eight written validated references from past employers for five of the adults.
- (b) Two written validated references from reputable sources for two of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4)

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Evidence available demonstrated 4 adults held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, it was not possible to determine the following;

- (2)
- (a)(b) It was not possible to determine if vetting procedures had been completed for one adult who is employed by an external organisation. It is acknowledged that in date Garda Vetting was on file for this person.
- (d) It was not possible to determine if international police vetting was required for one adult who is employed by an external organisation.

(3)

It was not possible to determine if the procedures specified above in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to two adults being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) Evidence for one adult was not available to confirm that they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

This non-compliance was previously identified on the last inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider confirmed that documentation for one adult, who is recruited by an external organisation, has now been supplied. The letter confirms Garda vetting has been completed, and the person is recruited in line with the recruitment policies of the organisation.

All staff files have been confirmed that all staff have two references, Garda vetting and qualifications on file.

The national quality framework was contacted in relation to the qualification. They department confirmed they do not give certificates. The only supply the record of awards. These are held on staff files.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of letter submitted

Record of Award submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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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 preschool children attending the service.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was always maintained throughout the inspection. There were 11 children present in the service being supervised by five adults during the inspection.

(8)(a)

The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present 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

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Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

Basic Needs

- Bibs and aprons were available and observed in use by the children for messy play activities.
- The weather on the day of inspection was cool. Staff ensured that the children wore appropriate clothing to ensure children were warm on the day whilst in the outdoor area.
- Children did not sleep or nap whilst in the service on the day of inspection. A cot was available for sleep if required for children under two. For those over two, a suitable cosy area was available for rest.
- Children in both care rooms were observed to be play freely, with support and interaction from staff present. There was easy access to the outside area throughout the day.

Supporting Relationships around children

- During meals the staff were observed to sit at the table and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere, assisting children to feed themselves when required.
- Staff were observed to demonstrate a fun, positive and respectful manner in their interactions with children in their care.
- Positive parental communication was observed at collection time, with detailed handover information given to each parent or guardian.

Physical and Material Environments

- The environments in both care rooms were found to be well-resourced and child-centred for the age and stages of development of the children present. The hallway contained further resources and play materials with the area observed to be used as an additional play zone, giving children an alternative change of environment during the day.
- A designated rest area was available in the preschool room with a variety of books accessible, supporting children's language development and literacy skills.
- On the day of inspection all children had access to an outdoor play area. The garden featured, astro turf floor cover, tuff trays, small world play material, balls, rockers, and an outdoor kitchen to support sensory, energetic and imaginative play.
- A recently installed roof shelter provided privacy from neighbouring properties, as well as protection from the elements, making the outdoor area usable all year round.

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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

General Safety:

- The main entrance was monitored by staff of the main building, preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises. The preschool entrance is secured by a coded lock, which is monitored by staff.
- Records of children's arrival and departure times were observed to be maintained accurately and updated in real time, supporting effective evacuation of children present on the premises in the event of an emergency evacuation.
- The outdoor area was secure and safe. A new roof structure was recently built to protect the privacy of the children from the adjacent overlooking residential buildings.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair throughout the premises.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by mechanical vents.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes, and after sensory activities.
- Foot pedal bins were observed in operation throughout the premises.

Administration of Medication:

- When discussed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms, along with records of regular fire drills that had taken place.

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Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Infection Control:

2. There was no hot water in three of the services sinks. Two sinks were in the nappy changing and children's toilet area, and one sink in the staff toilet facilities. To facilitate effective hand washing, thermostatically controlled hot water is required. It is acknowledged warm water was available in the sink of the preschool room. This non-compliance was previously identified on the last inspection.
3. The service did not ensure that the soothers used by the children were stored or labelled correctly. This could lead to a risk of cross infection, for example, soothers were observed hanging on a shelf. This non-compliance was previously identified on the last inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting had been applied for but it did not come back and has been re-applied for again. The person in charge will ensure staff put in for renewal of vetting in a timely manner.
2. The plumber was contacted and suggested an immersion be fitted by an electrician. It is advised this work will take place over the summer.

Infection Control:

3. The registered provider confirmed that parents have been asked to leave soothers in their child's cubby outside of the care room. Children who require them for comfort have been supplied with their own bag.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Evidence of Garda vetting renewal submitted.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 point 3 has been adequately addressed. While a response was submitted and accepted for point 2, the corrective action will remain outstanding until evidence is submitted to the inspectorate upon completion of works. Although a Garda Vetting application has been made a copy of the

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disclosure has not been submitted to the Inspectorate. Therefore, the non-compliance under point 1 and 3 remain outstanding.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured adequate insurance was in place for the preschool service for 18 children up until 31st December 2026.