

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY126
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Name of Service:	Little Stars Childcare & Montessori
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Address of Service:	351A Navan Road, Dublin 7, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D07 HP80
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niall O'Reilly
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	27/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	38
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15.
Inspection undertaken by:	Á Dunne & E Hosford
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).

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Description of service

Little Stars Childcare and Montessori is a private service located in Dublin 7, which offers full day care to children. The service operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. A service is provided to children aged between 1 to 6 years of age. The service operates from a purpose built two-storey building in a residential area with an additional care room in a prefabricated building to the rear of the premises. The outdoor play area is situated to the rear of the premises, with an artificial grass surface and fully enclosed.

The service operates from five care rooms namely: on the ground floor the Tadpole room with a cot room and the Frog room both catering for children aged from 1-2 years old, on the first floor the Caterpillar room catering for 2-3-year-olds and the Cocoon room catering for 3-4-year-olds. To the rear of the premises, is the Butterfly room in the prefabricated building catering for pre-school children in the 4-5 age group

Staffing

The registered provider employs 16 adults who work in the service to include the person in charge, deputy person in charge, 12 childcare staff working directly with the children including one staff member currently on statutory leave, one relief childcare staff member and a cook. The registered provider does not directly work in the service. On the day of Inspection, the person in charge was working in the Butterfly room and a relief staff member arrived at 11.14 to support in the rooms. The deputy person in charge was supernumerary providing support where needed to cover breaks and support nappy changing, together with managing oversight of the service and facilitated the inspection.

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

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- 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 the regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 23 and 26.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 23 Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of child. Regulation 11 Staffing levels was assessed across all rooms. As a result, the scope of the inspection included four care rooms - included Tadpole, Caterpillar, Cocoon and Frog rooms and did not include the Butterfly room.

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 person in charge, deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

(2) It was confirmed by the person in charge that nine new staff members have been employed in the service since the last inspection. The files of the nine adults were reviewed as part of the inspection along with Garda Vetting disclosure for one staff member whose file was reviewed on the last inspection.

(a) Eleven written and validated references were available from a past employer.

(b) Two written and validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 10 adults. The service had 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) Police vetting was available for seven staff who have lived outside of the State for longer than six months as an adult.

(4) Documentation was available to show that eight staff who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

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Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

1. One written and validated reference was not available for two adults.
2. Three written references from a past employer were not validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) Required references were obtained and validated. Management will ensure two written references are provided by new employees and validated by Management before the start date of the employee.

Supporting documentation submitted

Required written and validated references, Management sign off document.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the evidence and actions submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 have 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained on the day of inspection as outlined below.

- **Tadpole Room** (aged 1 year to 2 years) 1 adult was caring for 3 children in the morning.
- **Frog Room** - (aged 1 year to 2 years), 2 adults were caring for 5 children in the morning and 3 adults were caring for 8 children in the afternoon.
- **Caterpillar Room** - (aged 2 years to 3 years), 3 adults were caring for 9 children in the morning and 2 adults were caring for 8 children in the afternoon.

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- **Cocoon Room** - (aged 3 years to 4 years) 2 adults were caring for 12 children in the morning and 3 adults were caring for 14 children afternoon.
- **Butterfly room** - (aged 4 years to 5 years) 1 adult was caring for 10 children in the morning and 1 adult was caring for 8 children in the afternoon.

The deputy person in charge was available to support rooms for breaks, nappy changing or where required to meet adult : child ratios.

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:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*

Compliance Information

- (i) Staff roster was available demonstrating hours each staff worked.

Non-Compliance Information

- (j) A review of ten medication administration records for thirteen administrations of medicine demonstrated that all the details were not completed on each record, as follows:
 - The signature of the second staff member was not recorded for three administrations of medicine.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (j) The second staff member has been requested to sign the medication record book and a discussion with staff was completed about the importance of staff signatures for the staff member administering the medication and for the staff member who witnessed the administration of the medication.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (j) Photographic evidence, staff sign off on medication administration training.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the evidence and actions 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, and

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- The service provided meals and snacks at regular intervals and a hot meal to the children. On the day of inspection, the inspectors observed a hot meal of chilli con carne with rice was served at 11am in the Tadpole and Frog rooms and between at 12.00 and 12.16pm in the Caterpillar, Cocoon and Butterfly rooms supplied by an external food company. The afternoon snack, made in the service kitchen, was served at 2pm in the Tadpole and Frog Rooms and at 3pm in the Caterpillar, Cocoon and Butterfly rooms which was fruit with cheese and crackers. Water and milk were available in each care room for the children to drink.
- The transitions between activities such as outdoor play to mealtimes to sleep time were observed to be calm and relaxed with staff available to care for the individual needs of the children.
- All children in each room were observed to enjoy outdoor play during the inspection.
- Children's need for rest was met through the provision of comfortable rest areas available.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff were observed to have respectful, warm and responsive interactions with the children through the use of soft tones and positive non-verbal communication strategies such as being at the children's level and sitting with the children at mealtimes.
- The person in charge and the deputy person in charge, a relief staff member and staff supported each other in the provision of care to the children.
- Communication with parents was completed through verbal updates at drop off and at pick up and through the issue of a newsletter.

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Physical and Material Environment

- Low level shelving and child sized furniture supported children's independence.
- The materials and equipment provided to the children in the Caterpillar and Cocoon rooms were suitable to the age and stage of development of the children present. Children had the freedom to choose from materials and equipment available to them.
- Cosy areas were present in all rooms offering a quiet comfortable area for children to rest and relax during the day.
- The outdoor play environment to the rear of the premises was fully enclosed, the surface of which was covered with artificial grass. There was an overhead shelter to enable the children to access the outdoor area during inclement weather. The outdoor toys were suitable and available and included a climbing frame, with a slide, a slide, a playhouse, a wooden boat, a sand pit with supporting equipment, large plastic bricks, ride on toys, a tunnel and a seesaw.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and Material Environment:

1. The materials and equipment provided to the children in the Tadpole and Frog room did not support accessibility, the children's initiation of play and the extension of their ideas and imagination. For example.
 - Toys and supporting materials were mixed up together in boxes and were not organised to promote child led play for example one box labelled blocks contained animals
 - Empty wooden jigsaw frames and the matching jigsaw pieces stored loose in a box did not promote accessibility or child led play.
 - Jigsaws and puzzles had pieces missing and a sorting blocks box had no pieces, which reduced the children enjoyment and sense of completion.
 - The play kitchen was empty and not supplied with suitable toys and props and the available equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
 - Doctors set contained one piece only.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Management informed staff of the importance of setting up interest areas and maintaining them throughout the day in the care rooms and introduced Aistear and Siolta self-evaluation tool: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments Birth to 6 years. Play equipment has been sorted and organised and new

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play equipment has been ordered. Management to monitor resources being put back in the correct places at the end of the day. Staff to inform management of missing pieces of play resources.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence, Staff sign in sheet of evidence of Staff training. Self-evaluation tool for care environments.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the evidence and actions submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 have been adequately addressed.

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:

- On the unannounced arrival at the service by the inspectors, the entrance gate and door leading into the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises throughout the inspection.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children throughout the inspection.
- The outdoor area was a safe and secure environment with play equipment and materials clean and suitable for use by the children to include poles covered with secure foam padding.

Infection Control:

- Handwashing facilities for hand hygiene included thermostatically controlled water, soap and paper towels and pedal operated lidded bins for disposal of paper waste.
- Handwashing was observed after nappy changing, after bathroom visits, after outdoor play and before and after mealtimes.
- Soothers were stored in individual labelled boxes.
- During sleep time, low floor mats were positioned with the recommended 50 centimetres between each child.

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Safe Sleep:

- Children were facilitated to sleep in cots in the cot room or on stackable beds or in foldable cots in care rooms, with each child provided with suitable individual bed linen for sleep.
- Shoes and clothing were removed from children while they slept.
- Staff maintained 10-minute sleep checks on each child to include their colour, breathing and position. The temperature of the rooms was also recorded to ensure it was maintained within the recommended 18°C to 22°C for over 1-year olds.
- The service adhered to best practice sleep guidelines issued to the sector in September 2023 regarding consultation and written agreement from parents prior to positioning children under the age of 2 years on low contour beds. The required documentation was available to demonstrate that a risk assessment had been completed for one child and that parents had been involved in the decision to place their child on a low contour bed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The daily attendance of children in the service was not accurately reflected in the service attendance records; in the Caterpillar room at 12.05pm, 9 children were present but only 8 children were marked in as present in the service, leading to a risk of safety in the event of an evacuation.

Infection Control:

2. Infection control practices observed were at variance with the service policy and best practice guidelines. Leading to a risk of cross contamination or poor infection control, as follows:
 - In the Caterpillar room, the paper towels were not hygienically dispensed as they were placed beside the sink and were not in the dispensing unit and
 - In the sanitary facility beside the Caterpillar room, the toilet paper dispensing unit was observed to have no cover.
 - In the Caterpillar room, at 3.05pm for afternoon snack, raisins were poured directly onto the table, leading to a risk of poor infection control.
 - In the Tadpole room, the sink was blocked and stagnant water was present in the sink.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Management to discuss the importance of signing in and out of the Premises in the services Attendance books. Management to regularly review staff to ensure they are signing children in and out of the attendance books accurately.

Infection Control:

2. Management have completed the following:
 - Ordered new toilet tissue dispenser for toilet beside the Caterpillar room.
 - Ordered new hand towel key to open hand towel dispenser in Caterpillar Room.
 - Spoke with Kitchen staff and early years staff members that all snacks should be served in plates or bowls.
 - The appointed manager on site at 8am should ensure all sinks are not blocked before opening.
 - Management to monitor daily that tissue dispensers in all rooms are covered and not broken and that staff are regularly checking sanitary checklist.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Staff sign in sheet of evidence of Staff training.

Infection Control:

2. Photographic Evidence, Sanitary checklist, Staff sign in sheet of evidence of Staff training.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the evidence and actions submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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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 written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 24 March 2026.
- (b) A record was available of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment demonstrating it was last serviced on the 29 August 2025 and for the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced on the 30 January 2026.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed throughout the care rooms and the service.