

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH119
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Name of Service:	Little Scholars Creche
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Address of Service:	Unit 6, Yeates Centre, Dunboyne Village, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A86 A021
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lisa Byrne
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	56
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
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 Scholars Creche is one of two privately owned early years services which the registered provider operates in Dunboyne, Co Meath. The service provides full day, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children aged 0 to 6 years operating from a two-story premises and is registered to operate from 7:30am to 6.00pm Monday to Thursday and from 7:30am to 5:30pm on Friday. There are 5 care rooms in the service namely the Ladybug room and the Sunshine room which are located on the ground floor of the service, the Rainbow room, Butterfly room, Bumblebee room and Flower room are located on the first floor. There are 2 designated sleep rooms in the service, located directly off the Ladybug room and the Sunshine room. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme each morning from 9am to 12midday in the Flower room and from 9:30am to 12:30pm in the Bumblebee room for 38 weeks each year.

Staffing

There are 20 staff currently employed in this service including the registered provider. Eighteen staff members work directly with the children on a daily basis including the registered provider who was present in the service during the course of the inspection. A chef is employed in the service to prepare and serve the meals.

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.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations x, x and x; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation xx. 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.

Additional Information

The inspection was carried out following receipt of information to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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

(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*

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named persons to deputise in their absence.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the service manager 3 new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 17/11/2025. The 3 staff files were reviewed; two staff members work directly with the children attending the service.

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(a) The following references were available from a past employer.

Five written and appropriately validated references were available.

(b) The following references were available from a source other than a past employer.

One written and appropriately validated reference was available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 3 adults whose files were reviewed. 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) International police vetting was available as required for 1 adult who had lived outside the State as an adult for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 2 staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service including the registered provider held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies relevant to this inspection were requested and reviewed.

Behaviour management policy

Complaints policy

Children's charter

Partnership with parents policy.

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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 staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Ladybug room there were 10 children aged 10 months to 1 year 8 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Sunshine room there were 12 children aged 1 year 6 months to 2 years 8 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Rainbow room there were 9 children aged 2 years to 3 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Butterfly room there were 13 children aged 3 years to 4 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Bumblebee room there were 11 children aged 2 years 2 months to 2 years 7 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Flower room there were 14 children aged 4 years to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

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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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

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 of the service.

Basic needs:

- Throughout the care rooms in the service the early years practitioners were observed warmly engaging with the children, encouraging and collaborating with them when meeting their care needs and facilitating their play activities.
- The children bring their own morning snack with them from home and a hot meal is provided from an outside catering company with the remaining snacks and afternoon tea prepared on site. Mealtimes observed on the day of inspection were social and relaxed experiences, the practitioners sat with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging the children's independence with eating and provided support as required. The practitioners in the Ladybugs room and the Sunshine room positioned themselves at the children's level while assisting the children to eat and promoting the children's independence. In all the care rooms the children's water bottles were freely available for the children to take as desired throughout the day.
- The children's personal care needs were promptly attended to. Children had their nappies changed regularly and in a timely manner with the practitioners observed warmly engaging with the children throughout the procedures, taking the opportunity to chat with the children during this time. Toilet trained children were supervised discreetly when using the toilet and support was given when needed.
- The practitioners in the Ladybug room stated that the children in the care room were facilitated to sleep in cots in the adjacent sleep room when their needs dictated, generally in line with their home routine. This was observed during the inspection with children placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of

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tiredness and if the children's sleep times coincided with mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke up. The children attending the Sunshine room were facilitated to sleep in cots in the sleep room and in the care room after they had their dinner and the children in the Bumblebee room slept on stackable beds in the care room after dinner. Comfortable rest areas comprising of soft mats, cushions and appropriately sized seating was provided throughout the care rooms should the children chose to take a break from activities during the day.

- The children attending all the care rooms enjoyed time in the outdoor play area. The early years practitioners ensured that the children had sun cream applied prior to going outside and were dressed appropriately. Water was available to the children in the outdoor play area.
- The early years practitioners approached children's behaviour in a supportive manner, calmly distracting or re-directing the children and using problem-solving techniques to good effect before any minor issues escalated.

Supporting relationships around children

- Throughout the service practitioners were observed to speak to the children in a kind and respectful manner, children's first names were used with gentle voice tones used in all interactions. The children were supported by being kind to each other and were listened to in addition to being praised and encouraged throughout their play. Practitioners spoke positively and warmly to and about the children during the inspection.
- On the day of inspection practitioners were observed to work positively with each other throughout the day communicating regularly with each other regarding the children's care routines and schedules. This facilitated consistency of care for the children.
- In the Sunshine room and the Ladybug room a daily record of what the children ate, nappy changes, sleep and activities was maintained and shared with parents and guardians. Parents were communicated with in a friendly, unhurried manner at drop off and collection time and received verbal updates on their children's daily progress.
- A child attending the Sunshine room was in the process of settling into the service on the day of inspection. The child was provided with extra support and comfort as needed throughout the day all to good effect.
- Family photographs were on display in the care rooms including the Ladybugs room and the Sunshine room which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and bridge the gap with home.

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Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were bright and welcoming; the play materials and resources were available on low level shelving in the care rooms allowing children unrestricted access to resources and facilitating independent choice. The children in the care rooms demonstrated familiarity with their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- Throughout all the care rooms interest areas including resourced home areas with play kitchens with a range of accessorial equipment for the children to extend their play including play crockery and cooking equipment, dress up materials, shopping areas, construction materials and transport toys were available. Age-appropriate play equipment to support the development of the children's fine motor skills were also provided in these care rooms. These included jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, shape sorters, magnets, interlocking plastic toys, stacking toys, threading equipment, peg boards and jigsaws. There was ample space and some props were provided in the Ladybugs room to support children in the early stages of walking.
- The children's artwork was displayed on the walls of the care room which supports the children's wellbeing by feeling valued and appreciated.
- An enclosed outdoor play area was located to the side of the service. The area was divided into 4 distinct sections to include a construction area with a range of building and construction resources for the children to enjoy, an area with 2 large water tables with wall mounted water pipes for the children to use. Sensory play was further enhanced through the provision of a sand area which included a large sandbox with a variety of toys for the children to use. A home area was provided which included a resourced kitchen area with a table and chairs and a shop area. Gross motor play was supported through the provision of a slide and ride on toys. A rota is in place in the service to enable all the children in the service maximum time in the outdoor area on a daily basis.

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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 entrance door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The outdoor play areas were fully enclosed and secure which reduced the risk of children exiting unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the outdoor space.
- The kitchen was always inaccessible to children during the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and at the wash hand basins in the care rooms in the service.
- Appropriate disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being worn for each individual nappy change.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe sleep:

1. Ten-minute sleep checks were not recorded to observe the colour, position, breathing patterns of one child aged 16 months from the Ladybugs room who slept from 11.30am to 11.50am. This is not within safe sleep guidelines.

Infection Control:

2. The steps in the services infection control policy were observed not to be followed as evidenced by the following:
 - The children attending the Sunshine room or the Ladybugs room did not wash their hands before they had their morning snack.

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- The practitioner or the children's hands were not always washed following nappy changing.
- Practitioners were observed wiping children's noses without washing their hands afterwards.
- 3. The children attending the Bumblebee room were brought to the nappy changing area in pairs, while one child was being changed the other child was playing on the floor. This routine is not in keeping with good infection control practice.
- 4. In the Bumblebee room the required 50cm distance was not maintained between the children's beds when the children were sleeping.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Safe Sleep:

1. Staff were reminded of the importance recording the children sleeping, their positions, breathing and body colour.

Infection Control:

2., 3., 4. All staff have been reminded on the importance of hygiene and infection control.

Preventive Action

Safe Sleep:

1. Staff were told the importance of completing the record sheets. Also new sleep diagrams have been completed in order to ensure all sleep beds are at least 50cm apart at all times.

Infection Control:

2., 3., 4. Visual aids have been put in place to ensure staff are using correct measures to prevent infection spreading and resent policies and procedures stating the importance of hand washing.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspectors were requested to record their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The children's attendance records were not completed in a timely manner as demonstrated by the following:

- In the Sunshine room at 09:50 am there were 12 children in attendance of which 3 were signed into the attendance record. This was brought to the attention of one of the practitioners in the care room who retrospectively completed the attendance record.
- In the Ladybugs room the details of the attendance of two children had not been accurately recorded in the attendance book. One child who was present on the day was not recorded as present from 09.15am until 09:50am and a second child who was present on the day was not recorded as present from 11.30am to 11.50am. It is acknowledged that this was rectified on both occasions when the inspector brought this to the attention of staff. Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children in an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

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Corrective Action

(1) All staff have been reminded that roll books and attendance is recorded correctly when children arrive/ depart of the service.

Preventive Action

(1) Management checks roll books daily to ensure they are completed properly

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance has been adequately addressed.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) &(c) A complaints policy was available in the service which outlined the procedure to be followed in the management of complaints within the service.