

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022MH003
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Name of Service:	Bettystown's Little Stars
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Address of Service:	The Whitefield Hall, Bettystown, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A92 YR9N
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Name of Registered Provider:	Katarzyna Wlodarska
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	48
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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

Bettystown's Little Stars is one of seven early years services owned and operated by the registered provider, all located in Dublin, Kildare, and Meath. Bettystown's Little Stars provides full-day, part-time and sessional care to children from 0 – 6 years of age from a purpose-built premises located in a housing estate in Bettystown in Co Meath. The service provides care for up to 64 pre-school children at any one time, operating from 7am to 6.30pm daily. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children from 9am to 12 midday daily. There are 5 care rooms provided in the premises, namely Tiny Stars room, Twinkle Stars room, Shining Stars room, Shooting Stars room and the Raising Stars room. A sleep room is accessed from the adjoining corridor and from the Twinkle Stars room. Two fully enclosed outdoor play areas are provided to the side and rear of the premises. Car parking is provided to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 17 staff members, including the registered provider, one area manager and a service manager. Thirteen staff are employed to work directly with the children, and one staff member is employed as the service cook.

One student was present in a work experience capacity in the Shooting Stars room on the day of 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
- Discussion with relevant staff

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 22 Food and drink, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 28 Insurance.

Sampling

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

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Statutory Notices		
Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN1221	14/04/2026	International police vetting was not available for one staff member who had access to children and who lived outside of the Irish state for more than 6 months as an adult.
Status	The registered provider submitted corrective and preventive actions, which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	
Improvement Notice IN1222	14/04/2026	Ambient room temperatures in the Shining Stars room during sleep time for children aged over 2 years were 23.8°C, which is above the recommended range of 18 - 22°C. The staff were not recording accurate sleep room temperatures on the sleep logs; temperatures were all recorded at 20°C, which varied on the day.
Status	The registered provider submitted corrective and preventative actions, which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	

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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
- (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.

(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 had a designated person in charge, who is the service manager, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, the designated person in charge or the named person in charge was on the premises.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, a staff display board and through discussion with the staff team.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, the information available upon this inspection

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and through discussion with the person in charge onsite, it was determined that 8 new staff members and 1 new student had started in the service since the last inspection. The references on file for 9 staff were compliant upon the service's last inspection; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references were on file for 8 staff and 1 student.

A total of 10 written and validated references were from a previous employer.

A total of 8 written and validated references were from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting for 7 out of 9 staff reviewed upon the last inspection met regulatory compliance; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. The two staff whose vetting was due for renewal were available on file as required.

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the 8 new staff and 1 new student.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff and student.

(d) The requirement for police vetting for 7 staff present at the last inspection was compliant; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. A review of the employment history for 8 staff, and 1 student demonstrated that 4 staff members had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for 3 staff members was available on file.

(4) The qualifications for 9 staff present at the last inspection were compliant; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. The documentary evidence available to review confirmed that the 7 new staff employed to work with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for the cook was not required, as they do not work directly with preschool children. The student was present in a training capacity only.

Non-Compliance Information

(9) (2) (d) See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN1221 served.

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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 the inspection, there was an adequate number of adults to meet the care needs of the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult-to-child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult-to-child ratios were observed when the service was operating at maximum attendance;

One adult cared for 5 children aged 1 year to 1 year 4 months in Tiny Stars, of whom all attended on a part-time or full-day care basis. The manager and floating staff from other care rooms were observed to be available to assist in this room when required, for example, at nappy changing times.

Two adults cared for 8 children aged 1 year 7 months to 2 years 4 months in Twinkle Stars, of whom all attended on a part-time or full-day care basis.

Two adults cared for 11 children aged 2 years 3 months to 2 years 9 months in Shining Stars, of whom all attended on a part-time or full-day care basis.

Two adults cared for 12 children aged 3 to 4 years in Shooting Stars, one of whom 1 attended on a sessional basis and 11 attended on a part-time or full-day care basis.

Three adults cared for 16 children aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 9 months in Raising Stars, of whom 3 attended on a sessional basis, and 13 attended on a part-time or full-day care basis.

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In addition to the above, the service manager was working in the kitchen on the day of the inspection and was available to cover in the care rooms if needed.

(8) A review of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being were facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

The promotion of healthy eating was encouraged within the service. The food items served were healthy and nutritious choices. Snack and meal times were unhurried, with children given adequate time to finish their food before transitioning back to play or ready for sleep time. The children's drink bottles were available to them throughout their day. Children were observed to have drinks or water at various times during their play.

The older children were encouraged to use the toilet by themselves, with adults remaining close by for support.

The children who wear nappies had their nappies changed in line with their routine and personal care needs.

Where children had soiled their clothes, these were changed promptly.

Children in the Shooting, Shining and Raising Stars rooms experienced a change of environment to the outdoor area during the inspection and were dressed appropriately for the weather on the day.

Sleep time for all children occurred after dinner time in the designated sleep room and the Shining and Twinkle Stars rooms, which were set up with floor beds after dinner time.

The younger children in the Tiny Stars room were all mobile and were observed to freely explore their care room independently. A climbing frame was in the Twinkle Stars room, where children were observed to engage in gross motor play by using it.

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Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival in all care rooms was warm and welcoming. The children appeared familiar with the staff who cared for them and were seen to call for help from staff when needed. The younger children engaged in play closely supported by the staff, and the older children took pride in their play and spoke to the inspector about what they were “baking” with playdough in the Raising Stars room and enjoyed a story and discussion with staff about Space. In the Shooting Stars room, children had created a large playdough octopus using crepe paper and pipe cleaners and took pride in showing the inspector their creation, and conversations about recent birthday parties were overheard between children.

Some children had recently transitioned to new care rooms and were observed to enjoy exploring their new environment. The staff used gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings, such as encouraging turn-taking and sharing of play materials, such as a popular book about space. The staff were observed to communicate using soft, gentle tones while interacting with the babies and children, and in all care rooms, adults were observed to sit with the children on low-level chairs or on the floor and engage in play with the children. Staff were observed to work well together, and transitions were observed to be smooth throughout the day. Communication with parents is through in person at arrival and collection times, where the parents ring a specific bell for a care room, and when access is provided, they can come directly to the care room to collect their children. A digital application is also used to record children's daily information, to include activities, sleep times, eating times plus toileting/nappy changes throughout the day.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service provides all snacks and meals daily to the children in attendance. A 3-week menu was on display detailing all snacks and meals that children availed of while in the service. The snacks and meals listed on the menu, whilst taking into consideration the ages of children, provide a suitable, nutritious, and varied choice for the children. Meals were adjusted to suit younger babies needs where required.

Breakfast consists of a choice of cereal. Morning snack on the day of inspection was rice cakes, chopped grapes and watermelon. The hot meal was a chicken dinner with potatoes, vegetables and gravy. An afternoon snack of crackers and a selection of fruit was planned for the afternoon.

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Where children have specific dietary requirements, the person in charge and the staff explained how they cater and provide for any request from parents regarding same.

The person in charge advised the inspector that if extra dinner portions were requested by children, these were provided plus additional food items for snack times, if required, are also available in the kitchen.

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 inspector observed the following safety measures in practice within the service:

The main entrance door was secured by a key-coded magnetic system upon the inspector's arrival. The entrance door remained locked at all times during the inspection, ensuring no unauthorised person could enter the building or no child could leave the building unsupervised. A visitor log was maintained, and the inspector was required to detail their attendance upon arrival and departure. Ground surfacing, both indoors and outdoors, was maintained in a good state of repair with no trip hazards observed. Storage areas were locked when not in use and remained inaccessible to children. Cleaning products were stored safely out of the reach of children. Play equipment and resources were observed to be maintained in good condition. The children were adequately supervised throughout the inspection process. The outdoor areas are surrounded by walls and fencing and secured with gates to prevent a pre-school child from gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger. Risk assessments were completed, and records were available for review. Blind cords where fitted were secured out of children's reach. Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

Handwashing was observed to take place after the children used the toilet and before meal times.

Thermostatically controlled warm water, hand soap, bins, and paper towels were available at each wash hand basin. The service was notably well kept, with all care rooms and sanitary areas observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic manner. Cleaning schedules were in place, up to date and completed by the relevant staff, which in turn was evident through the clean and hygienic presentation of the service. Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the service's policy. Children's soothers were stored individually in labelled boxes.

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Safe Sleep:

Sleep facilities provided were adequate for children aged under 2 years. One large cot room to include a total of 11 cots was available for children's use. Additional foldable cots were also available.

Individual bed linen was provided for each child. Each cot was individually labelled and used solely for the named child. Sleep records available for review detailed each sleeping child's name, colour, breathing, position, room temperature and staff signature at 5-to-10-minute intervals.

Children aged over 2 years slept on floor beds and stackable beds in the Twinkle Stars and Shining Stars care rooms after dinner. Staff were observed to remain in these care rooms while the children were sleeping on floor/stackable beds.

Non-Compliance Information

See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN1222 served.

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 record of monthly fire drills that take place was available for review. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 23 March 2026.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated 16 July 2025, and the smoke alarms were dated 18 December 2025.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 64 pre-school children attending the service on a full-day care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2026 to 27 March 2027.