

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025DL010SA
Name of School Age Service:	Little Bears Afterschool & Activities
Name of Registered Provider(s):	Aisling McHugh
Address of School Age Service:	Main Street Car Park Unit 2, Donegal, Co. Donegal
Eircode:	F94 YY6H

Date of Inspection:	07/07/2026			
Number of school age children present during inspection:	AM	NA	PM	12

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan
Title:	Early years inspector

Authority to Inspect
Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:	Little Bears Afterschool and Activities is a privately owned standalone school age service located in Donegal town, Co. Donegal. The service is registered to provide school age care to children aged 4 to 12 years of age. The service opens from 07:45 to 09:00 and 13:50 to 18:00 during term
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time. During school term, on half days the service opens from 12:00 to 18:00. Outside of term time, the service opens from 09:00 to 18:00. The service operates from one care room on the ground floor of a commercial retail unit which has been adapted for the purpose of a school age service. Sanitary accommodation is available onsite. A full paved outdoor area is available to the side of the premises, with a fencing panel providing privacy from the main retail thoroughfare.

Staffing:

Five adults, including the registered provider, are employed in the service to work directly with school aged children. On the day of inspection four adults were present. One adult is available to provider cover in the event of staff absences.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- a) caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- b) provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- c) the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, registered provider, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

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Statutory Notices		
Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN1544	07/07/2026	Garda Vetting was not available for one adult working with school age children.
Status	Action was taken by the registered provider following service of the notice. The provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.	

Summary of Findings:

On Inspection, the registered provider was found compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 9(2): Staffing levels
- Regulation 11: Premises
- Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

The registered provider was found non-compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

Conclusion and follow up actions:

The inspector reviewed the registered providers response, documented and photographic evidence that was submitted. The non- compliances found on inspection have been adequately addressed.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.*
- (2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

Staff files in respect of five adults were reviewed and the following information was available:

- (1)(d) International police vetting was not required as records demonstrated that no adult had lived outside of the state for longer than 6 months as an adult.

Regulatory Requirement not met

- (1)(a)(b) Six written and validated references were on file in respect of three adults, however there were no references on file in respect of two adults.

(c) See statutory notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN1544 served. It is acknowledged that Garda vetting disclosures were available for four adults.

- (2) The above procedures were not carried out prior to three adults commencing in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

- (1)(a) The missing references were obtained and verified.

(c) Garda Vetting was obtained for one staff member and submitted to the inspectorate.

(2) In future all references and required vetting procedures will be carried out before a staff member commences employment in the service. A new checklist system has been introduced for all staff files to ensure all required records are kept.

Summary of Findings

The documented and photographic evidence submitted has been reviewed by the inspector and has met the regulatory requirements.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The registered provider ensured that adequate staffing levels were maintained during the inspection.

(2)

On the afternoon of the inspection:

Two adults cared for 12 children aged 5 to 10 years of age.

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Regulation 11: Premises

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that-
(a) an outdoor space to which the school age children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or

Regulatory Requirement Met

An outdoor area was available to the side of the building. The area was furnished with sand tables, tethered tennis, goalposts and footballs, plastic brick tables and giant four in a row. The children were observed moving freely between the indoor and outdoor space. All children were observed playing outdoors during the period of inspection.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

There was one adult trained in first aid available to the children on the day of inspection.