

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL167
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Name of Service:	Little Footsteps Creche and Montessori
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Address of Service:	32 Brookdale Road, Swords, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K67 R672
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Name of Registered Provider:	Hannah Snell
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	16/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	Not applicable
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor Unit 4/5, The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15.
Inspection undertaken by:	Y Kelly
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 Footsteps Crèche and Montessori is situated in a residential area and provides a sessional, part-time and full day care service to children from 0 to 6 years. The service operates from 07:45am to 5.45pm and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The premises consists of 3 care rooms, the Wobbler and Toddler room on the ground floor with the Montessori room on the first floor, kitchen, office and sanitary facilities. Outdoor spaces were located to the front and rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 8 staff members including the registered provider who work directly with the children. Two cover staff members provide relief cover in the service when needed. The registered provider was present in the service on the day of the inspection.

Methodology

Tusla 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the regulations 8, 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 Records of a Preschool Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler Room, Toddler/Junior Montessori Room and Montessori 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Compliance Information

A notification of change in circumstances was submitted to notify a change in registration details in relation to the change of registered provider.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service. There was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was an early years practitioner who was present in the building when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09:15am. The registered provider arrived at 09.20am.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that 2 new staff members had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection which was carried out on the 01 May 2025. The full staff files for 2 adults were reviewed for adults who work directly with the children including 1 cover staff member. Outstanding Garda Vetting disclosures in relation to 3 staff members and outstanding International Police Vetting for 1 staff member employed at the previous inspection were also reviewed.

The following was recorded:

(a) Three written and validated references were available from past employers.

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- (b) One written validated reference was available from a reputable source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 3 adults whose files were reviewed. Garda vetting disclosures demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring the service to renew Garda vetting every three years. Two staff members that had outstanding Garda Vetting disclosures from the previous inspection are no longer employed in the service.
- (d) International Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside of the state for a period of more than 6 months. One staff member that had outstanding International Police Vetting from the previous inspection is no longer employed in the service.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 1 adult who works directly with the children 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 Minister.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) Documentary evidence was not available for 1 adult who works directly with the children in the service to confirm that they 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, Disability and Equality.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (4) The staff members future rostered days were cancelled, and a request was made for staff member to obtain permission to practice with qualification verification in writing.

Preventive Action

- (4) Updated policy and implementation of cross-checking staff qualifications against recognised qualification list, reflected on newly updated recruitment policy dated 20 August 2026.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Screenshot of request email.
- Updated recruitment policy.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 9 has been 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 the 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 inspector arrived unannounced at the service and remained so throughout the inspection.
- The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:
- In the Wobbler Room there were 4 children aged 1 year 2 months to 2 years 4 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
 - In the Toddler/Junior Montessori Room, there were 9 children aged 2 years 2 months to 4 years 3 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
 - In the Montessori Room there were 9 pre-school children aged 3 years 7 months to 5 years 2 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) On review of 12 children's registration records, the required information and details were available. The following information was included:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child.
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service.
- (c) a provision for the date the child ceased to attend the service.
- (d) the name and address of an emergency contact of the child that can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service.
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

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Non-Compliance Information

(1)

1. On review of 12 children's records the following required information and details were incomplete as follows:

- Two out of the twelve children's records sampled did not contain the information required under Regulation 15(1)(e) *"authorisation for the collection of the child."*
- One out of the twelve children's records sampled did not contain the information required under Regulation 15(1)(f) *"details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention."*
- One out of the twelve children's records sampled did not contain the information required under Regulation 15(1)(g) *"the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner."*
- Two out of the twelve children's records sampled did not contain the information required under Regulation 15(1)(h) *"record of immunisations, if any, received by the child."*

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)1. The enrolment records for the children identified during the inspection were immediately reviewed. Parents were contacted, and all missing details were completed.

Preventive Action

(1)1. Little Footsteps is reviewing and enhancing its enrolment process to prevent incomplete child profile forms. This includes piloting a digital form feature with mandatory completion fields. Where paper forms continue to be utilised, a secondary review by a designated second staff member will be conducted to verify and ensure 100% field completion.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographs of all updated files. Redacted as necessary for sensitive info.
- Copy of the new trial digital registration form.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 15 has been addressed.

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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

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 in the service:

Basic needs:

- Mealtimes were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Children's meals were provided by an external catering company and reheated by the staff. On the day of the inspection the children had baps with butter and cheese for morning snack, penne pasta with lentil arrabiata sauce and an option of mashed potato for dinner and cheese and turkey sandwiches for tea. There were alternative food options available for children with additional dietary requirements or preferences.
- The children's water bottles, jugs of water and cups were readily available to them throughout the care rooms and in the outdoor areas for them to take as desired throughout the day.
- The children's personal care needs were attended to promptly. Nappy changing occurred at scheduled times and more frequently as required throughout the day. Staff members engaged positively with the children during this time using it as an opportunity for one-to-one interactions with the children. The children who were toilet trained used the toilet independently.
- Seven children from the Wobbler room and Toddler/Junior Montessori Room over two years of age slept on mattresses in the wobbler room. There is a separate cot room consisting of two cots for children under two years of age. Children slept when they were tired and at scheduled sleep times.
- Children attending the service were given the opportunity to spend time in the outdoor area during the inspection.

Supporting relationships and interactions around children:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service. Appropriate communication using soft tones was observed and children were provided with comfort when needed. This supported the development of relationships and a sense of belonging.

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- During transition to sleep, staff were available to assist the children in getting ready and helping them to settle whilst going to sleep.
- Staff discussed that they communicate and share information with parents using an online messaging application and complete daily toddler reports to share information about children's care needs with parents.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, children's photographs were displayed in frames on the wall and there was a 'Family Wall' display with photographs of children's families displayed in each of the rooms. There were cubbies for children to store their belongings in the hallway and in the Montessori room.

Physical and material environment:

- There was age-appropriate furniture with small child sized chairs and tables for children to sit whilst they played or for mealtimes. Toys and equipment were visible and accessible to children on low level shelving which facilitated children's independence in play. The rooms were divided into different areas of interest which provided opportunities for a variety of spontaneous play experiences and choice for children. In the Wobbler Room there were mats, soft toys and large foam blocks for floor play and to provide physical play opportunities for children and play kitchen activity centre for floor play. In the Toddler Room and Montessori room there were home corner areas including wooden kitchen, dolls, dress up unit with dress up clothes, bags and hats and puppet theatre all of which supported the children's imaginary play experiences. A variety of small world play materials such as dinosaurs, animals and people and transportation toys including wooden trains and train tracks supported children's imaginative and dramatic play experiences. Construction materials included plastic building bricks and wooden blocks, and tabletop materials such as jigsaws to support fine motor development and early numeracy learning opportunities. Art and crafts materials including a paint easel, pencils and pages and chalkboard provided mark making opportunities and creativity for children. There were cushions and a selection of books for reading and relaxation and to support children's early literacy and language development.
- There were two outdoor play areas which provided opportunities for outdoor play. In the front outdoor play area there was a water tray with waterwheel, cups, ladles and saucepans for sensory play. There was a workbench with toy tools for pretend play and a small table and bench for children to carry out tabletop activities. A fully enclosed outdoor area divided into two areas is located to the rear of the service. In the large outdoor play area there was a large wooden slide with climbing frame and house, small plastic slide, plastic tunnel and see-saw which promoted safe risky play, gross motor and fundamental movement skills.

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In addition, there were two small playhouses and a play kitchen for pretend and dramatic play. A sandpit with buckets, spades, people and shapes and three containers with water and animals provided opportunities for sensory play and a blackboard for mark making. There was a large wooden covered area with seats which enabled children to be outdoors regardless of weather conditions. In the smaller area, which was surfaced with artificial grass there were trays and areas for digging and materials such as buckets and spades.

Programme of Activities and its Implementation:

- Children's learning and development is documented through observations and learning stories of the children. Staff discussed that children's learning and development is documented in children's learning journals which include observations and 'well' moments. The curriculum is also informed through conversations with children about their interests, some children had been to the zoo recently and the children were interested in learning about animals. Children were given opportunities to draw shadows of wild animals at the table during outdoor time or engage in discussions about animals using the 'animal world' board to discuss where different animals originate from.
- Stories were read with children throughout the morning during indoor and outdoor times.

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:

- Entry to the service was managed by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The outdoor play areas were fully enclosed and secured. The rear outdoor area was mainly surfaced with an impact absorbing surface.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of the children.
- Suncream was observed being applied to the children for outdoor play. Each child had their own suncream provided by parents. Children were encouraged to wear sunhats as protection from the sun.

Infection Control:

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- Thermostatically controlled water, liquid hand soap and dispensed handtowels were available in the sanitary facilities.
- Children were observed to hand wash independently before meals, and this was encouraged and supported by staff.
- Windows were open in the care rooms to allow fresh air to circulate.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspector observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were being performed and documented on sleeping children, noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern at the time of each check.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of an emergency evacuation.

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Outing:

- The Montessori Room went on an outing to the local park. The staff used walking ropes for all children to hold onto, and all children wore high visibility vests for safety measures. The staff also brought a first aid kit.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The ambient temperatures in the Wobbler room during sleep time was not maintained at 18 °C -22 °C as evidenced in the table below. These temperatures posed a risk to the safety and comfort of the children in attendance. It is acknowledged that the staff implemented control measures seeking to achieve recommended temperatures by opening windows and doors in addition to using portable fans. However, although partially effective as evidenced in the temperatures recorded, these measures did not prevent the room temperature from remaining high.

Date	Location	Air temperature	Time recorded
16/07/2026	Wobbler room	24.3 °C	12.55pm
16/07/2026	Wobbler room	23.9 °C	13.15pm
16/07/2026	Wobbler room	23.9 °C	13.25pm
16/07/2026	Wobbler room	24.3 °C	14.17pm
16/07/2026	Wobbler room	23.4 °C	14.20pm

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

- Purchase of a new cooling fan for the sleep room.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

- Staff have been informed and encouraged to use the new cooling fan in the sleep room in conjunction with the existing portable fans when and where necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photograph and Receipt.

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Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(2)(a) Adequately stocked first aid kits were observed in the staff room, kitchen and Montessori room of the service.

(b) First aid boxes were stored out of the reach of the children but available to staff as needed.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not ensure that a staff member trained in FAR was available on the premises throughout the opening hours of the service. There was no staff member available with a PHECC accredited First Aid certificate from 07:45am until 09:20am when the registered provider arrived on the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1) The registered provider stated that there was an immediate rota adjustment. Roster schedules were immediately restructured to ensure that a designated PHECC accredited FAR staff member is physically on-site from opening from 7:45am until closing every day.

Preventive Action

(1) Staff upskilling in PHECC accredited First Aid Training. The registered provider is booking an additional staff member onto certified PHECC First Aid training course to build a larger pool of certified responders across all shifts, preventing gaps due to leave or sickness.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Future rosters provided displaying FAR trained staff member present from opening shift to close.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 25 has been addressed.

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) The registered provider ensured the following:
- (a) A record of fire drills was available on the premises with the last fire drill dated as having been carried out on the 08 July 2026.
 - (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the hallway of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(b) An up-to-date record was not available of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (1)(b) Contacted the certified fire safety contractors to obtain up-to-date service and maintenance certificates and logs, placing them directly into the service's master Fire Safety Register on-site.

Preventive Action

- (1)(b) Implemented an automated and recurring calendar alert for routine professional servicing via contractor inspections.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Fire alarm system certificate to include smoke alarms dated 21 July 2026.
- Firefighting equipment certificate dated 21 August 2026.
- Photograph of automated annual calendar alert.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 26 has been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 33 children for full day care with an expiry date of 27 March 2027.