

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC009
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Name of Service:	Able Minds Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Rockhill, Grenagh, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T23 C802
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Name of Registered Provider:	Olive Carton-Walsh
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue
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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Able Minds Montessori School is a registered privately owned early years service in operation since 2007. This service is registered to cater for children from 2-6 years and at time of inspection the service was catering for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current opening hours are from 9.30am to 12.30pm each day Monday to Friday.

Able Minds Montessori School is located in a rural area in Grenagh, Co Cork. The service operates from a building that is located to the rear side of the registered providers private residence. The premise consists of two playrooms, and an outdoor play area located beside the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider was operating the service single-handedly. The service has a second person familiar with the operation, within proximity of the service and to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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, and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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 on the premises on the day of inspection. The person in charge operated the service single-handedly.

(b) A person in charge was on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.

(c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included the person in charge and emergency worker.

(2) Two staff work in the service; all two staff files were open to inspection.

(a) Of the four references required, three validated references were from past employers.

(b) Of the four references required, one validated reference was available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all two staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not deemed to be required for the two adults working in the service.

(4) All two staff held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at least at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times.

(3) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

- There was one staff working with nine children aged between 3 years and 5 years of age, all attending sessional care.

(8)

(c) The registered provider ensured that an adult familiar with the operation of the service and was available to assist in operating the service, was available at all times and within a close distance of the service in the event of an emergency.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) Children's enrolment forms were assessed for 10 of the children registered as attending the service. The records inspected had the detail required as listed from (a) to (i).

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*

(f) the opening hours and fees;

(g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;

Compliance Information

(1) All records in relation to the service 1 (a-g) were inspected, all required information was available.

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:

- Children had access to their water bottles throughout the session.
- Children were encouraged in developing their independence skills such as putting on their own coat and zipping it up. Staff were available to support children if required.
- Parents/guardians provided a mid-morning snack which consisted of sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts.
- The children were observed independently accessing the sanitary areas. The staff were available to provide assistance, if required.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff spoke with children at their level, in a calm and relaxed tone. Children were at ease with staff and were comfortable in expressing their feelings and emotions to the staff members.
- Children engaged in parallel play and were observed to check in on their friends and include them in play.
- Staff were asking children if they wanted to participate in cleaning up, children were observed to freely get the dustpan and brush and support staff with clean up after free play.
- During mealtime staff sat at the table and engaged in social conversations with the children.
- Staff explained that the activities are child led, and children voice their interests and staff support their knowledge and learning through songs, activities, games and crafts.

Physical environment:

- The layout of the room allowed for children to move freely around and choose whichever activity or toys they wanted.
- Children had access to a variety of equipment and play materials which included acorns and logs.
- There were tabletop activities available to the children which included puzzles, blocks and magnets. Children also had the option to choose their own game if they did not want to participate in the tabletop games.
- There were a variety of sensory activities available to the children on the day of inspection. These included sand play, nature play with acorns and leaves and a sensory board.
- Children had access to a cosy corner or rest area which consisted of cushions and mats. Children were observed to use this area throughout the session.
- Children were observed in outdoor play, where children could freely bring toys outdoors along with a plastic table and chairs. There was a wide choice of activities for the children to choose from outdoors. This included mud kitchens, slides, skipping ropes, balance boards, sand pit and water play.

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 internal and external doors of the service were secured and prevented children from exiting the premises and unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- Toys and equipment appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- Blind cords were securely out of reach of children.
- The openable windows were out of reach of children.

Infection control:

- Windows were open for natural air ventilation.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables between activities and prior to mealtimes.
- Regular handwashing was observed throughout the day. Staff were observant of handwashing and ensured children's hands were clean from dirt from outdoor play.
- Pedal operated bins were observed in the main room and sanitary facilities.
- All perishable foods were stored in the refrigerator.

Administration of medication:

- No administration of medication was observed on the day of inspection. Discussion with staff ensured staff were aware of the correct process for administering medication in the event it was required.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were clear if any obstruction and were clearly identified in the room.
- Fire equipment was available in the event they were required.

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 designated book was available to document regular monthly fire drills.

(b) A list, which detailed the number and type of firefighting equipment was maintained on file. The records indicated that the smoke detection system and fire alarm system was serviced in October 2025 and the firefighting equipment was serviced in October 2025.

(4) The fire evacuation procedure, outlining details of the steps to be followed in the event of a fire, were displayed in various locations throughout the premises. The fire assembly points were clearly signposted.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A copy of the insurance certificate for the service was furnished to the inspector. The information provided on the insurance certificate included:

- The contact details for the insurance provider.
- The name and address of the service insured.
- The number of children covered by the insurance was 22 children.
- The categories of insurance cover for the service.

The expiry date of the current insurance cover was 27 March 2026.