

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC073
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Name of Service:	Bright Start Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Southside Community Centre, Sandfield, Mallow, Co Cork.
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Eircode:	P51 DK2W
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Name of Registered Provider:	Liz Hourigan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square Mallow Cork P51DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	B Fraher
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

Bright Start Montessori Pre-school is a private early years service located in Southside Community Centre in a residential area in Mallow town and is adjacent to Scoil Ghobnatan National School. This sessional service operates from 8:30 to 11:30, Monday to Friday 38 weeks of the year and accommodates children who are 2 to 6 years of age. The building consists of two classroom, four toilets, an office and an entrance area. There is a kitchenette within one classroom. The service has an enclosed outdoor play space also. Currently one classroom and three toilets are in use, one being for the staff.

Staffing

The service currently employs two staff and the registered provider is service based. A total of three adults were working directly with the children on the day of 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

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.

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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 children, registered provider and staff 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 registered provider was the designated person in charge on the day of inspection and a named deputy was in the service that could deputise as required.
- (b) The person in charge and the deputy were on duty at the service when the inspector arrived. The staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or the deputy were on duty at all times during the hours of operation.
- (c) There was clear evidence on inspection of the management structure in place and the specific roles of each staff member. This was on display on the notice board.

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- (2) The recruitment records in relation to two adults, all of whom were employed in the service and working directly with the children and the registered provider were the subject of inspection.
- (a) Of the six required references, five were from previous employers with required records of validation on file.
- (b) Of the six required references, one was from another source other than a previous employer with a record of validation on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained and were on file for each of the three adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) No staff member had lived outside the state for over six months as an adult; therefore, no police vetting was required.
- (4) There was evidence that two adults who required childcare qualifications all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. A third adult had a Letter of Eligibility to Practice from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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 were reviewed:

- Policy on authorisation to collect children
- Policy on healthy eating
- Policy on outdoor play

The policies contained the information required to guide staff in their care practices for the children.

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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.

(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.

Compliance Information

(1) At the time of inspection, there were the adequate number of adults required, responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance at all times.

(3) The service exceeded the minimum ratio required as per regulation in the care room. The 16 children attending the service were supervised directly by 3 adults.

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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.*

Compliance Information

(1) The service has 22 early years children registered and a sample of 10 records were inspected. They were found to contain the required information as listed (a) through to (i).

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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,

Compliance Information

Basic needs:

- Children snacks, provided by the parents/guardians were observed to be healthy and nutritious in line with the service's healthy eating policy. Examples included filled sandwiches, fruit, cucumber and yogurt.
- Staff sat at the tables during snack time, interacting with the children and provided assistance when needed to open food items.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children throughout the morning.
- The inspector noted that three children were sitting longer at the snack table than the other children, who had finished their snacks, were given sufficient time to eat without being rushed.
- The location of the sanitary facilities allowed children independent access, as needed. Staff were observed to manage toileting in a sensitive manner, for example, through offering reassurance to the children.
- Outdoor play was promoted and observed at the time of inspection with staff observing and assisting children during play. The inspector observed children playing with a ball, a kitchen with water, a slide, sand and toy cars.
- While outdoors, the children were noted to be dressed appropriately in coats and had puddle suits available for use if needed.

Supporting relationships:

- All children were observed to be actively encouraged by staff to participate in activities. Materials and resources were available which accommodated each child's individual needs such as puzzles, moulding dough, bricks, toy kitchens, cars, dinosaurs, water play and books and the adults sat at the table at the children's level completing artwork, observing block building and engaging with the children.
- Children were observed to enjoy the sensory area in the room.

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- Staff engaged with the children in both group and individual activities by getting down to their level and maintaining eye contact while discussing topics with the children and helping them with their chosen tasks. Group activities such as singing and guessing what was in the bucket were observed on the day of inspection.
- The children were encouraged to take assigned jobs on a job chart and to tidy up after completing tasks, which promoted a sense of responsibility.
- The adults were observed to be kind and caring towards the needs of the children in their care. An example of this was when a child was crying in the care room and an adult immediately comforted the child.
- The staff promoted positive behaviour among children encouraging them to take turns and share as seen in the care room and outdoor area.
- Family photos and a birthday calendar were displayed on the wall in the care room which promoted a sense of belonging for the children.
- The registered provider stated that they communicated with the parents through the use of a learning journal, email and text messages or verbally at drop off or collection. Parents are also given the opportunity to have an individual meeting about their child.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- An adequate number of low-level chairs and tables were provided for the children for indoor use.
- The care room was suitably resourced with age-appropriate interest items, which were stored on low level shelving at the children's eye level. Examples included puzzles, books, toy cars, dolls, artwork, a kitchen with play items.
- All indoor equipment and material assessed were found to be in good condition.
- The equipment used in the outdoor area was in good condition and was able to be stored under a roofed area when not in use. A basketball hoop, a tunnel, books, a toy kitchen, sand, cars and a balance game were available for use.
- Children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of a child size vinyl sofa.

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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:

- On the day of inspection, the entry gate was appropriately secured on the premises and entry was gained through the outdoor play area. This restricted unauthorised access into the building and helped to prevent the risk of children exiting unsupervised.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children on inspection.
- The outdoor area was observed to be secured with metal fencing and a metal gate.
- The windows in the care room were adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children.
- The radiator temperatures were maintained at an appropriate level.

Infection control:

- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels. Posters of handwashing were visible reminding the children of good hygiene practises and supporting the children with their personal care.
- Children were observed to wash their hands before meals and after using the sanitary facilities.
- Lidded, foot pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste during the inspection.
- Children's coats and bags were stored off the ground on wall hooks to be prevent cross infection.
- Perishable foods were stored in the refrigerator to prevent food spoilage.
- Staff were observed disinfecting tables before and after food being served.

Administration of medication:

- Temperature reducing medicine was stored out of reach of the children and the observed medicine was in date.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.
- Fire extinguishers were secured to the walls.

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Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

A tall storage shelving unit in the Tiger room was not anchored to the wall. This posed a safety risk to children as the storage unit could fall during use and potentially cause injury.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

The tall storage press has been removed. Any further tall storage units in use will be secured to the wall.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

The statement from the registered provider is accepted.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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-

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

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service.

(3)

(b) A daily record of visitors to the premises was kept in a visitor's logbook. The inspector was requested to signed this and the in and out times were recorded from the service.