

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CC128
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Donna's Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Cregane, Buttevant, Co. Cork
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<b>Eircode:</b>	P51 T862
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Donna Cullen
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	15/08/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	44	PM	40
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD5Y
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E. Friel
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

Donna's Montessori is a private early years service established in 2000, provision includes full day care, part-time and sessional services. Business hours are from 7.00 am until 6.00 pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated in the morning between the hours of 9.00 am until 12 noon, term time only. The service accommodates children aged from zero to six years of age and a school age service is available with a breakfast club operating from 7.30 am until 9.00 am and an afterschool club from 1.30 pm until 6.00 pm.

The premises are located near Buttevant, a rural town in North Cork. It is a single storey, purpose built childcare service comprising of an entrance area leading to a main corridor off which there are four care rooms namely Butterfly, Caterpillar, Buzzy Bees and Baby Bunny. A kitchen, storage area, dedicated sleep room and sanitary facilities for both adults and children are also located in this area with a second dedicated sleep room located off the Buzzy Bee care room. There are three secure outdoor play areas available, and a car park is located at the side of the service.

### Staffing

There were ten staff employed in the service all of whom were working directly with the children on the day including the registered provider and two adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

### 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.

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, person in charge, staff 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.*

*(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:*

*(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

### Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and a deputy and named persons were available on the premises. The deputy and named persons were on the premises when the inspector arrived and the registered provider arrived shortly afterwards.
- (b) The staff roster indicated that either the designated person in charge, deputy or named persons were on the premises while the early years children were present in the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure displayed, with roles and responsibilities outlined, in the reception area of the service.
- (2) Recruitment files for all ten adults, including the two AIM Support Workers and the registered provider were reviewed;
- (a) There were ten validated references from previous employers.
- (b) There were ten validated references from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults working directly with the children. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) An international police vetting disclosure was available for one adult who had resided outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer as adults.

(4) There was evidence that eight adults working directly with the children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent. Two adults who did not have the required qualification had letters of eligibility to practice from the Department of Children & Youth Affairs.

### Non-Compliance Information

(7)

(a) Contrary to the supervision policy which stated that management and staff would carry out regular support and supervision meetings and that the manager would keep written records on a personnel file, this was not found in practice. Staff stated that supervision had not taken place and management stated that a plan was in place to commence supervision when all new staff were in place at the end of August 2024. No supervision records were available.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

(7)

(a) Staff have been allocated a specified date and supervision will be take place in the next six weeks. Following on from the first supervisions session, subsequent individual supervision with staff will take place every three months. Details of the supervision session will be recorded on the staff supervision record and will be signed by each staff member and a copy placed in their file.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the registered provider has been accepted. A copy of the staff supervision record was received in the office of the inspectorate.

### Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 7 (a).

### 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, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place and contained the necessary particulars:

1. Safe Sleep policy
2. The Healthy Eating policy

### 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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working with the children at all times.

(2) The adult child ratios were met.

There were four care rooms in operation on the day of inspection.

#### Baby Bunny (12 months – 24 months)

There were eight full day care children in attendance with two adults in the morning and in the afternoon.

Buzzy Bees (18 months – 3 years)

There were eight full day care children in attendance with two adults in the morning and in the afternoon.

Caterpillars (2 years 6 months – 3 years 6 months)

There were twelve children in attendance with three adults in the morning and in the afternoon.

Butterfly Room (2 years 9 months – 6 years)

There were sixteen children, seven of whom were school age care children, in attendance with two staff member in the morning and in the afternoon.

- (8)
- (a) The staff roster indicated that there were two adults on the premises at all times when the early years children were present in the service.

**Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service**

**Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play**

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
  - (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

**Compliance Information**

- (1)
- (a) Each of the four care rooms was equipped with developmentally appropriate play materials and toys.
- Tables and chairs, suitable for the age and stage of the children, were available in each room. Examples included the Baby Bunny care room which had eight high chairs these were fitted with trays and were only in use for meal times, while the children in the Buzzy Bee care room were seated on age-appropriate chairs with their feet observed to be placed on the floor.
  - Play materials and toys were positioned on low-level shelving providing easy access and choice while promoting independence.

- The Baby Bunny room had two large foam mats, mirrored walls for the children to explore their own reflections and develop a sense of themselves, and push and pull toys on the floor within easy access.
- There was an adult sofa in the Baby Bunny care room where staff could sit and feed, cradle and comfort children.
- There was sufficient space available for each child to explore both the indoor and outdoor environments. Children in the Baby Bunny care room had space to crawl and walk and both the Baby Bunny and Buzzy Bees children shared the same outdoor play area away from older children.
- There were three secure outdoor play areas available providing alternative environments for the children to play in. One play area, opposite the main entrance, had a large, covered area, with a small concrete wall where the children could play outdoors in all weathers. There were a mix of ground surfaces including grass, artificial grass and concrete. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided in each area which offered opportunities for practicing gross motor skills such as climbing, crawling and riding with examples including large physical apparatus with slides and swings and various wheeled tricycles and scooters and a tunnel. Sensory materials of sand and water with developmentally appropriate resources were available for children to explore and experiment with in the outdoor areas.

(b)

- There was a designated sleep room, adjacent to the Baby Bunny care room with eight cots for children under two years of age and a second dedicated sleep room with three stackable beds located off the Buzzy Bee care room.
- Children were observed sleeping on demand following cues / signs of tiredness throughout the day. At 10.30 am, a child was observed sleeping in the Baby Bunny designated sleep room and a further four children were observed asleep at 12.45 pm.
- Rest/quiet areas were provided in each of the care rooms to facilitate a child to rest or sit away from noisy activities.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b)

Five of the ten children resting/sleeping in the Buzzy Bee care room at 11.50 am, under two years of age, were observed to be sleeping on stackable beds, which are not suitable for use with children aged under twenty-four months. While the inspector noted that the sleep policy had been updated, to include the new sleep

advice for children under twenty-four months issued to the sector in September 2023, the registered provider stated they were unaware of the specific sleep equipment for children in this age group.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provide:

All children under twenty-four months now have access to a cot where they can sleep or rest during the day.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

### Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 20 (1) (b).

## 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 promoted healthy eating. All snacks and food were provided by the parents/guardians.

- Staff stated wheat and oat-based breakfast cereals along with water and milk are available from 8.00 am until 8.45 am. Mid-morning snack was observed in the Baby Bunny room from 11.00 am onwards where children were observed eating yogurt, crackers with butter and bite sized pieces of fruit and vegetables.
- Lunch was served at from 13.45 pm in the Butterfly care room and was noted to consist of pasta bolognaise, chicken, rice and salmon. Children who did not want to eat their lunches were offered alternatives. Staff stated that afternoon snack is available from 3.00 pm and evening snack is available at 4.30 pm for those children remaining on in the service.
- Children in the Baby Bunny care room were observed being assisted to eat with spoons while children in the Butterfly care room had access to forks.
- Water was observed to be available at all times in each care room and in the outdoor play area from individual bottles which were easily accessible from storage containers located within reach of the children.

- Children's bottles in the Baby Bunny care room, with various types of milk, were observed to be stored in the fridge.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The inspector observed that seventeen out of twenty-four children, in the Butterfly care room at lunch time, were waiting twenty minutes or more from initially sitting at 13.35 pm until 13:55 pm to receive a hot lunch. One staff member was re-heating the food in two microwaves in the kitchen, a third microwave in the Butterfly care room was not in use. Some children were just receiving their lunch when others had already left the table.
- (2) Crockery was not provided in the Butterfly, Buzzy Bees and Baby Bunny care rooms at lunch time where children were observed eating food from their lunch boxes. In discussion, the registered provider stated that crockery was available and will be used in the future.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider:

- (1) The children are now divided into three groups. One group is brought in, and the three microwaves are in use to ensure that they receive their hot food in a timely manner before the next group come and sit for lunch.
- (2) Age and stage appropriate crockery is now available for all children to eat their lunch from.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

(1 and 2) The statements from the registered provider have been accepted.

### Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 22.

### 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 is through a tall metal gate in the outdoor play area which is controlled by key pad and a buzzer which was answered by staff, preventing unauthorised staff from gaining entry and unsupervised children from leaving the area. A security camera is also available in the service.
- The kitchen was locked with a key and the adult toilets were secured with sliding bolts located at the top of the doors, preventing children accessing unsafe areas.
- Windows were fitted with restrictors preventing children from exiting or falling from them.
- Blind cords in the Baby Bunny dedicated sleep room and in the Buzzy Bees care room were secured on hooks, out of reach of the children.
- The eight highchairs in the Bunny care room were all fitted with safety harnesses in which appeared in good working order.
- Toys and equipment appeared well maintained and in good condition in both the indoor and outdoor areas.
- Flexes and cables were secured and stored out of reach of the children in the care rooms and in the sleep rooms
- Cleaning agents in the care rooms and in the sanitary areas were observed to be stored on high shelving, out of reach of the children.
- The security monitoring device in the Baby Bunny care room was observed to be securely mounted.
- The perimeter of the three outdoor play areas were secured with block walls, high metal fencing, high hedging and metal gates.

##### Infection Control:

- All sinks in use by the adults and children in the service were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, 37°C, dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste.
- Handwashing was observed before and after toileting and food and when coming in from playing outdoors.

- Staff in the nappy changing area were observed following the nappy procedure of the service with staff disposing of gloves and aprons after each nappy change.
- Perishable food was observed stored in the fridges of each care room preventing the food from spoiling.
- Highchairs in the Baby Bunny care room, and tables in the care rooms, were disinfected before and after mealtimes.
- Floors were swept maintaining a safe and hygienic environment.
- Windows in the care rooms and in the sanitary areas were opened aiding the circulation of fresh air.
- Microwave sterilising trees were visible in both the Baby Bunny and Buzzy Bee care rooms, preventing cross contamination from used soothers.
- Children’s personal belongings were stored on hooks and cubby areas in the Butterfly care room, away from the floor area.
- Cleaning checklists in the care rooms were found to be completed and kept up to date.

### Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was observed to be stored in their original containers, in a high cupboard in the changing area between the Caterpillar and Buzzy Bee care rooms.

### Safe Sleep:

- A large air conditioning unit was stationed in the Baby Bunny designated sleep area helping to main the recommended sleep room temperature, for children over 12 months, between 18°C and 22°C.
- Documentary evidence, furnished to the inspector, indicated that sleep records were available for each child. Recorded details included the child’s colour, position, breathing and the temperature of the sleep room.
- Cots and stackable beds were noted to be at least 50 centimetres apart.

### Fire Safety:

- All emergency fire doors were unobstructed, aiding the quick evacuation of children and adults in the event of an emergency.
- The fire evacuation point was visible on the wall in the car park area of the service.
- Fire extinguishers were observed to be anchored, with brackets, to the walls in the service.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

- (1) A safety catch was observed to be missing on the fridge of the Baby Bunny care room, posing a safety risk from children accessing the fridge.

**Infection Control:**

- (2) The inspector observed that six of the eight mattresses in the designated sleep room were not waterproof or fitted with waterproof covers, posing a risk from leakages or accidents. This was in contrast to the service’s safe sleep policy which stated, “that mattresses must be waterproof or in the case of a cloth mattress protected with a waterproof cover”. In conversation, staff in the Baby Bunny room were unaware that there was no waterproof protection on the six cots.

**Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

**Corrective & Preventive Action**

The following statements were received from the registered provider:

**General Safety:**

- (1) A safety catch has been secured to the fridge in the Baby Bunny care room. Staff will check the safety catch to ensure that it remains in place.

**Infection Control:**

- (2) Six new waterproof covers have been purchased for the cots in the Baby Bunny sleep room.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

- (1) A photograph of the new safety catch fitted to the fridge in the Baby Bunny care room was received in the office of the inspectorate.

**Infection Control:**

- (2) A copy of the receipt for the waterproof covers was received in the office of the inspectorate.

**Summary Comment**

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

## 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

(1) First Aid Responder (FAR) certificates were available to evidence that three adults had FAR training completed and two additional adults had a certificate in paediatric first aid. The roster indicated that at least one adult with FAR training was available at all times.

(2) (a)(b) The suitably equipped first aid boxes, stored within easy access of the adults, were available at all times.

### 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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) The inspector observed that written records were available of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The record of the most recent fire drill was dated 16 July 2024, with previous dates noted as 28 June 2024 and 24 May 2024.
  - (b) Written records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service along with the smoke alarms. The firefighting equipment record was dated 17 April 2024 and the smoke alarm record was dated 13 December 2023.
- (2)
- (c) Both the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm records were open to review on the day of inspection.
- (4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on the notice board in the reception area of the service and in each care room.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

A written policy was available to evidence that the service was insured. The inspector noted that the service is insured for 72 children on a full day care basis. Details included public liability and fire and theft, with the expiry date recorded as 27 March 2025.