

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC191
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Joan Lehane's Montessori
-------------------------	--------------------------

Address of Service:	24 Masseytown, Macroom, Co. Cork
----------------------------	----------------------------------

Eircode:	P12 CY26
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Joan Lehane
-------------------------------------	-------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	17/09/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	n/a
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	M. O' Reilly
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
---------------------------------	-----

Description of service

Joan Lehane's Montessori is an established early years service that first opened in 1998. It is registered to accommodate a maximum of 17 children aged from 2 to 6 years. At time of inspection the service was catering for children from 2 years 6 months to 6 years offering a morning and afternoon sessional service to the children attending including the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. Daily opening hours are from 9:15 to 12:15 hours and from 12:45 to 15:45 hours Monday to Friday.

The service operates from two designated rooms in a domestic setting that have been suitably adapted to provide an early years service. The two playrooms are interconnected and the children have free access to both rooms. The service is located in an urban area in the outskirts of Macroom town in Co Cork. There is an entrance hall/lobby area, two playrooms with two designated children's toilets and an adult toilet. The service has a designated partially covered outdoor play area located to the rear side of the premise.

Staffing

The 4 staff included the registered provider/ person in charge. The staff who work directly with the early years children all hold a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education. A second-year college student was also undertaking a work placement at the time 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. 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, student 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) There was a named person in charge and a deputy available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The registered provider/person in charge and the deputy were present on the premises on day of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service.
- (2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for 4 staff members and 1 student on work placement, this included the registered provider. The following records were available:
- (a) Of the required 10 references, 8 references were from previous employers with the required records of validation on file.
 - (b) Of the remaining references, 2 references were from another source other than a previous employer with records of the required validation on file.
 - (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the 5 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Three police vetting records were on file for the two staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4)
- There was evidence that the 4 staff members had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, or an equivalent qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)
The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on day of the inspection.

(3)
During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children.

There were 13 children aged between 2 years 6 months and 6 years present in the sessional service with 4 adults and 1 student in attendance at all times. The adult child ratio exceeded the requirements.

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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(h) A written record of the attendance of each child on a daily basis that included the arrival and departure time from the service was recorded and maintained in the service.

(k) There was a hard copy Accident and Incident record book in the service. The Accident and Incident template included once signed by staff and parent, a duplicate copy of the accident and incident record for the parent /guardian.

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

- The service promoted healthy eating and the food provided by the parents and guardians for the mid-morning snack was observed to be healthy and nutritious. The mid-morning meal was observed to be a social occasion, as the children chatted freely in a relaxed environment and were offered appropriate assistance by the adults, for example, the opening of lunch boxes and cartons.
- Staff were observed assisting the children with hand washing and drying. Staff were observed assisting and encouraging independent dressing prior to playing outdoors and when going home. The children were observed waiting their turn, sharing the experience, which fostered the children's confidence in communicating in a group setting and promoted socialisation.
- The staff members were calm and relaxed whilst facilitating play opportunities and carrying out caring duties. Only low tones were used, and good eye contact was maintained with the children during one-to-one engagement. There was adequate space in the care rooms to accommodate a variety of play activities. A mixture of adult led play and child directed play was facilitated during indoor and outdoor play.
- The staff members were observed to work well together and the children were familiar with the daily routine. Staff were observed to interact in a caring manner with the children building their confidence and communication skills while playing indoors and outdoors. During observed tabletop activities, the children were supported and encouraged by the staff, who acknowledged their efforts and achievements.

Physical and Material Environment

- The service was clean and well maintained and the openable windows allowed for natural light and ventilation.
- The layout of the rooms promoted the independent access to all the materials to foster children's autonomy and freedom of choice.
- There were multiple tabletop activities to encourage fine motor skill play such as peg boards, threading and small construction bricks and jigsaws.
- Imaginative and pretend play activities included shop and home corner to allow the children to practice imaginative play in a sociable way with their friends.
- The playrooms were furnished with soft seating and a wide selection of books for the children.
- There was a partially covered secured outdoor play area provided beside the premise. The outdoor play area had a grass and cement surface. The following play was observed while children were playing outdoors. One group of children were observed playing with sand with accompanying play equipment and another group were happily digging. Other children were observed having gross motor play on push and ride on toys and playing ball with friends under the close supervision of staff.

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 children's parents and guardians provided all food items, and the children had their own water bottles
- Healthy, nutritious lunches were observed being eaten at the mid-morning snack such as sandwiches, rice cakes, rolls, yogurts, a selection of fruits and chopped and diced vegetables.
- Each of the children's lunches were placed on trays that had an easily cleanable surface.
- Perishable food items in the children's lunches were stored in the service fridge.

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 inspector's arrival at the service the main entrance door was found to have been secured and was maintained secured when not in use.
- There were no cleaning agents accessible to the child.
- The first aid box was appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children's reach in the playrooms in operation.
- The outdoor play area was adequately secured with a locked gate, walls and the premise building.

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities was available in the playroom and in the children's and adult toilet facilities. Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and disposable paper towels were in place.
- Handwashing by the children was observed before mid-morning snack, after toileting and messy play.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- The premises was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition and corresponding cleaning records were available.
- The openable windows allowed for natural light and ventilation.
- Tables were observed to be sanitised before snack time.

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) The registered provider ensured that there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certification on file indicated that two staff members held current up to date training.

(2)
(a) The first aid box was safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises.

(b) The fully equipped first aid box was available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the morning of the 12 September 2025.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment. The emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on the 13 November 2024.

(4)
The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for a maximum of 44 children in the morning and afternoon until 31 August 2026. The records detailed the category of service covered which was sessional care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, buildings, and outings cover.