

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CC231 | | | | |
| Name of Service: | Little Miracles Montessori | | | | |
| Address of Service: | Unit 3 & 4 Old Mill Business Centre, Seana Mhuilleán, North City Link Road, Lady's Well, Co. Cork | | | | |
| Eircode: | T23 K06A | | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Ciara Horgan | | | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 07/10/2024 | | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>16</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table> | AM | 16 | PM | N/A |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork |
| Inspection undertaken by: | D Prendergast |
| 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

Little Miracles Montessori was established in 2014. It is registered to accommodate children aged two to six years. Daily opening hours are from 9.00am to 12.00pm, over a 38-week annual period, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. A combination of Montessori and play based pedagogy is implemented.

Located on the outskirts of Cork city, the service is provided from the ground floor of an apartment complex. It consists of one operational care room, with adjoining sanitary facilities, a small kitchen, an entrance area and storage facilities. An adjacent outdoor play space, attached to the registered provider's other service, is accessible to the children.

Staffing

There are six adults attached to the setting, including one adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme and a relief staff member. The registered provider is based at the adjacent childcare facility. All six adults hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. A student was also undertaking a work placement at the time of the 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 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*

(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 had nominated a named person in charge of the service and a second adult had been appointed to deputise, should this be required.
- (b) The person in charge and the deputy were on the premises when the inspection commenced and either the deputy or the person in charge were present in the service for its duration. The registered provider attended the opening and closing meetings.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the six adults who worked at the setting were assessed, along with those of a student, who was completing a college work placement. The following information was noted:
- (a) Of the 14 required written and validated references, 11 had been provided by past employers.
- (b) Three of the references in place were from sources other than past employers and had been suitably validated.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all six staff and for the student. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documentary evidence indicated that three staff members had lived outside the jurisdiction for longer than six consecutive months, while over the age of eighteen years and the required police vetting was maintained.
- (4) Records demonstrated that six of the adults had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification was not required in respect of the student.

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 policy on Accidents and Incidents was reviewed and was found to include the necessary requirements.

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) During the onsite inspection, it was observed that a sufficient number of adults were involved in the direct care of the children.

(3) The registered provider ensured that the requirements of the regulation were adhered to. There were 16 children, aged 3 to 4 ½ years in attendance, with 3 adults present, including one AIM support staff member. The person in charge was also available to provide assistance. The student was not included in the adult child ratios.

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:

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

Compliance Information

(1)

(k) A sample of 10 accident and incident records were assessed and deemed satisfactory.

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)

Basic needs:

- The children were accommodated to have a snack at 10.20am. A calm and pleasant atmosphere was evident during this mealtime routine; the children appeared to enjoy their food and were assisted as required by the adults. In addition, adequate time was afforded to the children for eating and drinking, as was demonstrated when some of the children were facilitated to remain at the table with an adult, in order to finish their snacks, while others began preparing to go outdoors.
- Reusable water bottles which belonged to the children, were maintained where they could be easily seen and retrieved, as needed, throughout the day. A jug of water and cups were also accessible beside the water bottles, on a low-level table.
- Toilet trained children were supported to access the sanitary facilities in an independent manner, with supervision, prompts and reminders provided by the adults. The inspector was advised that children who required nappy changing were accommodated in one of the nappy changing areas in the adjacent childcare service.

- A clearly defined rest area was accessible to the children within the care room, should they wish to opt out of scheduled activities at any stage.
- Protective aprons were provided for children during a painting activity.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement as they participated in their chosen activities, within the spacious, uncluttered indoor environment. Outdoor play was also facilitated during the sessional service.

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 snacks consumed by the children during the sessional period were provided by their parents or guardians. Examples were observed to include sandwiches, crackers, a variety of fruit, cheese and yogurts.
- Most of the children had brought their own reusable water bottles and water was offered to those who had not.
- It was reported that none of the children had specific dietary requirements or food allergies.
- During discussion, the person in charge advised that if a child voiced that they were hungry outside of the allocated mealtime, they were free to choose something to eat from their lunch box. The inspector was also informed that snacks, such as crackers and fruit, were usually available at the service in the event that a child did not have a suitable lunch or required additional snacks.

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:

- A key pad entry mechanism on the exterior of the main entrance door, reduced the risk of unauthorised access to the service. On the interior, the door release button was positioned out of the children's reach, which minimised the risk of a child exiting the premises, while unsupervised.
- Staff members ensured that the kitchen was inaccessible to children, when the area was not in use; the door was secured and the key was stored on a high-level wall hook.
- A combination of walls and gates created a secure enclosure of the outdoor play space.
- Visibility markings were evident on the large glass panel windows, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a collision injury.
- The first aid box and cleaning supplies were stored in locations that were out of the children's reach.
- Fire extinguishers were securely tethered.

Infection Control:

- A supply of warm running water, liquid soap and a well-stocked paper towel dispenser were available at each of the children's wash hand basins. A foot pedal operated bin was provided for the hygienic disposal of paper towels. The staff toilet in the adjacent building was also adequately equipped.
- It was noted that the children washed their hands before the morning snack break and after returning from outdoor play.
- Upon arrival at the service, the children's perishable snacks were placed in the refrigerator, which reduced the risk of food spoilage.
- The children's coats and bags were suitably stored on wall hooks in the entrance area.
- The premises appeared clean and well maintained. One of the adults was observed to sanitise table top surfaces after the mid-morning snack.
- The care room was supplied with fresh air, through open windows.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered to any of the children at the time of inspection. Staff advised that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were noted to sleep during the inspection period.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were unobstructed.

Outing:

- During the morning, the children visited the outdoor play area in the adjacent childcare facility, which was located a short walk from the premises. This practice was managed safely by the adults, who guided the children carefully and provided verbal reminders.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) First Aid Response (FAR) certificates were on file for three of the adults who worked in the service and were valid until 26 April 2026.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Consistent supervision of the children was observed throughout the inspection period. It was noted that children were actively supervised by staff members during self-care routines, such as toileting and handwashing. The mid-morning snack was appropriately supervised, along with free play activities and the main door was monitored at collection time, while some of the children waited in the entrance area. In addition, it was apparent that the children were familiar with the practice of walking from the service to the outdoor play area, as they held hands and were directed and observed by the adults.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The available certificate demonstrated that adequate insurance was in place; the policy covered up to 22 children to attend the sessional service and was valid until 27 March 2025.