

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CC382
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Starting Point Montessori School
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Unit 1 & 2, Corlin Business Park, Church Road, Carrigaline, Co. Cork
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<b>Eircode:</b>	P43 YY75
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Joan Bradley
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	14/03/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	28	PM	2
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	D Prendergast
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

Starting Point Montessori School is a part time early years service, that is registered to cater for children aged two to six years. However, it currently accommodates children from the age of two and a half years. At present, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated from 9.00am to 12.00pm, over 38 weeks of the year; an afternoon sessional service was not in operation at the time of inspection. A combination of Montessori and play based pedagogy is implemented.

Located on the outskirts of Carrigaline, in Co. Cork, the service is provided from a single storey, commercial premises. There are two operational care rooms, namely Room 1 and Room 2, which consists of two interconnecting pods. Both child and staff sanitary facilities are available, along with a kitchen and there is an outdoor play area beside the building.

### Staffing

There are four adults employed at the setting, all of whom are involved in the direct care of the children who attend. This includes the registered provider and one adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme. Each of the four adults have attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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.

## Additional Information

This inspection was triggered by information received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

## Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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 person in charge of overseeing the operation of the service was the registered provider. A deputy had also been appointed, to deputise in her absence.
- (b) Upon the inspector's unannounced arrival, the registered provider was present in the service and remained for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of all four of the adults were reviewed and the following information was noted:
- (a) Five of the written and validated references were from previous employers.
- (b) There were three written and validated references from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Records on file demonstrated that each of the four adults had been Garda vetted. 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 available in respect of three of the staff members, who had lived outside the State as adults.
- (4) All four of the staff members had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

### 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 assessed and met the necessary requirements:

- Policy on managing behaviour
- Complaints policy
- Infection control policy
- Healthy eating policy
- Accidents and incidents 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) During the period of inspection, it was observed that there was a sufficient number of adults working directly with the children.

(2) The requirements of the regulation were adhered to as follows:

Morning:

Room name and age range of children	Number of children present	Number of adults present
Room 1 (3 – 4 years)	8	1 + 1 AIM support
Room 2 (2 pods) (3 to 5 years)	20	2

In the afternoon, two of the children remained at the service for part time care and there were two adults available during this time.

(8)

(a) Review of the staff roster and observation on the day of inspection, demonstrated that the service was consistently operated with at least two adults present.

### 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:

- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

#### Compliance Information

(1)

- (j) Signed parental consent had been obtained for staff to administer the medication which may be required by one of the children, who attended the service. It was stated that said medication had not been required to date, however, should the need arise, written provision was in place to record the details of administration.
- (k) The nine accident and incident records available since the beginning of the current school year were reviewed. Each record was dated and had been signed by the child's parent and by at least one staff member.

### 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:

- A mid-morning snack was accommodated in each of the three pods during the ECCE sessional service and a second snack time was observed at 12.35pm, for the children who were attending part time hours.
- The children's reusable water bottles were stored in their bags, which were easily accessible at their eye-level and could be retrieved as needed.
- Tissue boxes were appropriately positioned to enable children to attend to their own respiratory hygiene.
- The children were encouraged to use the toilet facilities independently, with supervision and reminders provided as needed, by the adults.
- Each care room included a cosy area, to accommodate any child who may need to take some time to rest and relax.
- The available space in both care rooms facilitated a variety of play and exploration. Outdoor activities were also observed to be included as part of the daily routine, during which the children dressed appropriately in coats and hats.

##### Supporting relationships around children:

- Meal breaks were notably relaxed and unhurried, with free-flowing conversation among the children and adults. During this time, some children were allocated the task of giving out lunchboxes to their peers and children were also prompted to help one another to open food packaging and containers. These practices encouraged a co-operative environment and helped to foster increased social interaction. Adult assistance was also provided, as needed.
- The inspector was advised that the service used a messaging application and email to communicate with parents, for example, to share curriculum plans and to issue reminders about upcoming events and activities.

Arrival and collection times facilitated informal discussion and in-person meetings could also be organised by request. This was observed in practice at the time of inspection, as the registered provider accommodated a pre-arranged meeting with parents.

- Staff members reported that brief daily meetings were held at the service and that extended staff meetings took place approximately every two weeks, to discuss any issues arising and to plan activities and upcoming events. The registered provider also stated that staff were sent weekly plans.

## 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

- Snacks for the children’s meal breaks were supplied by their parents or guardians and were observed to be available in adequate amounts. On the day of inspection, examples included wholemeal bread, sandwiches, crackers, rice cakes, yogurts, cheese, peppers and fruit such as strawberries, bananas, apples and chopped grapes, with water to drink.
- Children who remained to avail of part time care were facilitated to have a second snack in the afternoon.
- The inspector was advised that one of the children had a food allergy, which was managed through adopting a nut free policy at the setting.

## 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:

- Both access doors to the early years service were maintained secure when not in use. This practice minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the care rooms and also reduced the likelihood of a child exiting the premises, while unsupervised.
- Outdoors, the play environment was secured through a combination of high-level fencing, hedging and a secured gate.
- The staff toilet facility was secured from the exterior, which prevented the children from accessing this area of the service.
- There were no blind cords within reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored in a manner that was inaccessible to children.

##### Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing and drying facilities were available, including warm running water, liquid soap, disposable paper towels and lidded, pedal-operated bins. The children were observed to wash their hands before eating and after returning to the care room, following outdoor play.
- During discussion with the registered provider, it emerged that having initially experienced difficulty with ensuring the refrigeration of all perishable foods that came into the service, a clear system for meeting this requirement had since been developed. Upon arrival each morning, parents presented their children's perishable foods in sealable plastic bag, separate to other snacks and these storage bags were then placed in the service's refrigerator. Verbal reminders to parents to follow this practice were also provided. This was found in practice on the day of inspection, as all perishable foods were refrigerated prior to the mid-morning snack.
- Tables used for snack time were sanitised before use and the floor was swept once the children had finished eating.
- The children's coats were appropriately stored on wall hooks.
- Cleaning of the care rooms was undertaken following the morning session, when most of the children had been collected. This included sanitising surfaces and cleaning the sanitary facilities.

## Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication was not observed.
- Appropriate storage was ensured for the medication held for one of the children; the medication was stored out of reach of the children and had been labelled with the relevant child's name.

## Safe Sleep:

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

## Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were maintained free from obstruction.

## Outing:

- An outing was not observed.

## Non-Compliance Information

### Administration of Medication:

The expiry date had passed on one of the two available medications that were held in respect of a child. This posed a risk that expired medication, which may be unsafe to use, could be administered to a child.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

In the response received, the registered provider outlined that the parent of the child has provided the service with new medication and that the out-of-date medication has been returned to the parent. Going forward, the registered provider will check that medication provided by parents is in date.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was received.

## Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 23.

### Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

#### Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
  - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
  - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
  - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
  - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.
- (5) The requirement in paragraph (4) is without prejudice to any requirement to retain the record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) under any other enactment or rule of law.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) &(c)

The service's complaints policy clearly outlined the procedure to be followed by a person when making a complaint. It set out the steps to be taken when dealing with a complaint and how the person who makes a complaint will be kept informed regarding the progress of the complaint investigation.

(2)(3)(4)&(5)

A written record of a complaint was maintained and evidence was available to demonstrate that it had been managed in line with the service's complaints policy. Sufficient information was provided in relation to the nature of the complaint and how it was subsequently managed. Said information was presented to the inspector for review. The complaints policy outlined that the written record of the complaint would be retained for two years and this was confirmed in conversation with the registered provider.