

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC423
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Name of Service:	The Willows Montessori
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Address of Service:	The Willows, Model Farm Road, Cork
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Eircode:	T12 H938
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Long
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	20/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork. P51DD5Y
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Inspection undertaken by:	B Fraher
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Title:	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).	

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

The Willows Montessori is a sessional service that also caters for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE). It is a privately operated service that is carried out between two care rooms situated in the registered provider's private residence. There is an enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the premises. The service caters for children aged 2 years to 6 years. Opening hours are 09:20 to 12:20 daily.

Staffing

There are three staff employed, including the registered provider, one of whom is working under the Access and Inclusion Model. All three staff were work directly with the children. On the day of inspection, a student was also present.

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. 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

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider as both fire exit doors were locked with a key. This restricted exit access if it was required in an emergency. It is acknowledged that thumb turn locks were fitted on the 21 January 2025. This was adequate to mitigate the risk.

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 registered provider was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise if required.

(b) The registered provider was present when the inspector arrived on the premises on the day of inspection and remained for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The recruitment records in relation to 3 staff and 1 student in the service were the subject of the inspection.

(a) Of the 8 required references, 1 was from a past employer with records of validation on file.

(b) Of the 8 required references, 5 were from a reputable source with records of validation on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure had been obtained and were on file for each of the three staff members.

(d) Police vetting was on file for 2 staff members who resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 3 staff members employed, working directly with the children have achieved at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

On Inspection, references and identification were not available for the student on placement in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was made by the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

References and identification have been obtained for the student and these will be acquired prior to student placements in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was received.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative action submitted by the registered provider have addresses the non-compliances identified under Regulation 9.

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 fire safety policy was reviewed and was found to meet the necessary requirements.

Non-Compliance Information

The infection control policy did not include information in relation to the safe management of perishable foods.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was made by the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

The infection control policy has been updated to include safe management of perishable foods. The policy will be reviewed regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

The new policy was submitted.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 10.

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, the adequate number of adults required for the direct care and supervision of the children were in attendance at all times.
- (3) The adult child ratios observed during the inspection were as follows, there were 3 adults directly caring for the 18 children in attendance.

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) A sample of 10 records of early years children attending the service were reviewed. The were found to contains all the particulars inclusive from (a) to (i) above.

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) The Inspector reviewed the accident and incident record book. Two incidents were recorded for 2024 and contained the required information.

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

Basic needs:

- Snacks which were provided by parents/guardians were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Examples included rice cakes, sandwiches, fruit and yogurt and were stored in the refrigerator.
- Children had their own individual bottles, with water being the choice of drink. These were accessible to the children at all times.
- Staff provided assistance to children during snack time when needed.
- Children were observed throughout the morning accessing the toilet individually. The adults were present to provide assistance when required.
- The children were noted to dress appropriately for outdoors wearing coats, wet gear and wellingtons.
- The children have access to an outdoor play area which was observed to be enjoyed by the children at the time of inspection.

Supporting relationships:

- During snack time the staff members sat with children at the tables engaging in social conversation with the children.

- The staff members were warm and sensitive in their interactions with the children as seen when children were gluing photos onto artwork.
- The staff were heard to encourage the children. This was seen numerous times when children were attempting to match numbers and when another child was placing animal figures on the area of a world map.
- Children's independence was observed to be supported in a positive way, staff actively supported children to engage in their chosen activities.
- Staff were observed during circle time reading stories and encouraging children to explore the topic of the Artic.
- The registered provider was observed to promote the use of the Irish language within the setting. Children responded positively and engaged with the registered provider in Irish.
- Children were supported by staff to engage in conflict resolution. The staff member engaged in discussion and supported them to adopt a turn taking approach.

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 entrance door was locked on arrival to the premises. This restricted unauthorised access into the building and helped to prevent the risk of children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition and were free from pinch and crush points.
- All cleaning agents were seen to be stored out of reach of children.
- The temperature of the warm water in the care room and sanitary accommodation were recorded at 41.8°C to 42°C.

Infection control:

- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels. Children were observed to wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Staff were observed to remind children to do so.
- Lidded pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste.
- Children’s coats were stored off the ground on hooks.
- Staff were observed to clean the room when the session had ended.

Administration of medication:

- The registered provider informed the inspector that no medicine was being administered to a child currently in the service.

Outing:

- The registered provider informed the inspector that no outings occurred from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire safety:

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider as both fire exit doors were locked with a key. This restricted exit access if it was required in an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statement was made by the registered provider:

Fire safety:

A locksmith was contacted, and new thumb turn locks were fitted to both doors on the 21 January 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire safety:

A photograph was received of new thumb turn locks that were fitted to both fire exit doors.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance 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 attendance book was available in which the inspector observed that all of the children present on the day had their check in and out times completed for the duration of the inspection.

(3)
(b) Visitors records were kept in writing of any person entering the premises and the inspector was asked to sign in and out of the premises.

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) Evidence was available to demonstrate that one of the adults on duty held a current first aid responder (FAR) certification.

(2)
(a) A well-stocked first aid bag was available and was stored out of reach of the children.
(b) The first aid supplies were accessible at all times, should they be required.

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..

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The inspector was provided with a list of monthly fire drills. The most recent fire drill was undertaken on the 2 December 2024.
- (b) The certification of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that it was carried out on the 7 November 2024. And the certification of testing for the smoke alarm was dated the 22 August 2024.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate indicated that sufficient cover was in place for the provision of a sessional service and the policy was valid until the 27 March 2025.