

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC441
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Name of Service:	Toddle Inn Montessori
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Address of Service:	The Elms, Castlejane Woods, Glamire, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T45 CC60
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kelda Browne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	16/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	34
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher 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
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Description of service

Toddle Inn Montessori is a sessional category service, that is registered to accommodate children aged two to six years. In conjunction with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, two daily sessions are provided; from 9.00am to 12.00pm and from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. Children can also avail of an additional half hour between 8.30am and 9.00am, or between 3.30pm and 4.00pm. The programme of activities is based on Montessori pedagogy and play based learning.

Located in a residential area of Glanmire in Co. Cork, the premises consists of a two-storey building, which has been purpose built. There are two care rooms on the ground floor, both with adjoining sanitary facilities and on the first floor, there is a third care room, along with child and adult sanitary facilities, a kitchen/staff room and an office. A designated outdoor play environment is available at the rear of the building.

Staffing

At present, there are 12 adults in employment at the early years service, 10 of whom are involved in the day-to-day care of the children. This includes three adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme. Although not allocated to specific care rooms, the registered provider and the manager are also available to provider cover, as needed. All 12 of these adults have attained recognised awards in Early Childhood Care and Education. Three students were also in the process of completing work placements 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, deputy, 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 person in charge of operating the service and a deputy person in charge had also been assigned to the setting.
- (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the deputy was on duty and the registered provider arrived a short time later. Review of the staff roster indicated a practice whereby either the registered provider or the deputy were available at the service throughout the hours of operation.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the 12 adults and 3 students attached to the early years service were assessed and the following was noted:
- (a) Thirty written and validated references were required in total. Of these, 19 had been obtained from past employers.
- (b) There were 11 written and validated references on file from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 15 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) Six police vetting records were available on file for five staff members, who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer, as adults.
- (4) The 12 adults who worked directly with the children either held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or an equivalent qualification, recognised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) A second record of police vetting was unavailable for one of the staff members, who had resided in another jurisdiction for more than six consecutive months, as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d) The written response stated that police vetting has been obtained for the adult and is now available on their file. As a preventive measure, a checklist has been created for each new employee file, in order to ensure that everything is in place before their employment commences.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (d) A copy of the required police vetting.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance 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 service's policy on Accidents and Incidents was reviewed and was found to include the required detail.

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 period of inspection, it was noted that a sufficient number of adults were working with the children who attended the service.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children for a sessional category service was adhered to and met the requirements of the regulation. The rooms were in operation as follows:

Morning:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Available
Butterfly (2 ½ - 4 years)	13	2
Bumble Bee (3 - 4 years)	10	2
Ladybird (2 ½ - 4 ½ years)	21	5

Afternoon:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Available
Butterfly (2 ½ - 3 ½ years)	9	2
Bumble Bee (2 ½ - 3 ½ years)	8	2
Ladybird (2 ½ - 4 ½ years)	17	3

Three students were not included in the adult child ratios. The deputy and the registered provider were also available to provide cover as needed.

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 each record was noted to have been completed in full.

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 mid-morning snack was observed at 11.10am in the Ladybird room. The atmosphere was calm and sociable, as the children chatted and ate together. Staff members sat alongside and supervised the children, while encouraging conversation.
- Drinking water was freely available to the children during the sessional service; in each room, a large container was used to store their reusable water bottles and this was positioned at child height.
- Adjoining sanitary facilities allowed the children ease of access to these areas, as needed. It was reported that where required, nappy changing was carried out in response to children's individual needs.
- Comfortable rest areas were accessible for children who may wish to avail of a quiet space to relax. These spaces were furnished with vinyl sofas and were positioned next to well-stocked bookshelves.

- Clearly visible care plans were in place for children who had specific medical needs. During discussion, staff demonstrated familiarity with the practices required to ensure that appropriate care was provided to these children.
- The availability of sufficient space to accommodate the children’s play, exploration and participation was ensured in each of the care rooms. Outdoor activities were also observed as part of the daily routine; a sheltered outdoor play area was available and utilised during the wet weather conditions.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Appropriate assistance was offered to children in relation to self-care tasks. For example, when supporting children to put on their coats, the adults encouraged the children to try some of the steps themselves and when accessing and using the sanitary facilities, children were provided with verbal reminders.
- Actively engaging environments for the children were facilitated across the three care rooms. As the children participated in free play tasks, such as messy play, building, drawing and reading, they appeared focused and curious and the adults were observed to positively acknowledge the children’s efforts, when they presented their completed tasks and creations.

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

- Parents and caregivers supplied the children’s snacks for the sessional period.
- Nutritious and varied foods were provided for the mid-morning break. Examples included sandwiches, filled wraps, yogurt and a variety of fruit, with water to drink.
- The inspector was informed that some of the children had food allergies or intolerances. In managing these requirements, information to this effect was displayed in each of the care rooms. The inspector was also advised that a nut free policy was implemented at the setting.
- During discussion with a staff member, it was stated that if a child became hungry outside of the allocated mealtime, they were free to choose a snack from their lunch box.

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:

- Upon the inspector's arrival at the service, the main entrance door was found to have been secured and was maintained secure when not in use. This safety precaution curtailed the risk of unauthorised access and also reduced the risk of a child exiting the premises, while unsupervised.
- The sheltered section of the outdoor play environment was enclosed by walls and secured gates.
- Since the previous inspection, new slides with reduced slopes, had been purchased and were available in the outdoor play area. This supported children to descend at a slower pace when using the slides, which subsequently helped to reduce the risk of injury.
- Low-level cupboards used to store potentially harmful items were fitted with restrictive opening devices.
- Colourful adhesives were in place on glass panel doors, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a collision injury.
- First aid boxes were hung on high-level wall hooks in the care rooms.
- Blind cords were secured with suitable tension devices.
- Cleaning agents were stored in locations that were inaccessible to children.
- Firefighting equipment was safely wall mounted.

Infection Control:

- Warm running water, liquid soap and stocked paper towel dispensers were provided at each of the wash hand basins. This supported hygienic handwashing and drying, which was observed to be carried before the children's snack time.
- The children's perishable foods were refrigerated prior to the morning snack break.
- In the sanitary facility adjoining the Ladybird room, individually labelled drawers were used to store the children's nappies and wipes.
- The premises appeared clean and well-maintained. It was observed that following mealtime, tables were sanitised and the floor was swept.

- Wall hooks were in use to store the children's coats and bags.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered during the course of the inspection.
- Stored medication that may be required was found to be in-date, clearly labelled and was inaccessible to children.
- During conversation, a staff member demonstrated familiarity with the correct procedure for administering medication to a child, should it be required.

Safe Sleep:

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

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were maintained free from obstruction.

Outing:

- Not applicable, as an outing from the setting was not conducted.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The Garda vetting disclosure available for one of the adults was not dated within the previous three years, in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The Garda vetting has been updated and is now available on file. As a preventive measure, a list has been created which outlines the dates that Garda vetting was obtained for staff. This will be checked annually and vetting for each staff member will be updated before it expires.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the updated Garda vetting.

Summary Comment

Following the corrective action implemented by the registered provider, regulatory compliance is determined to have been met.

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) There were five adults with up-to-date certificates in First Aid Response (FAR) and review of the staff roster demonstrated that at least one of these adults was on duty during the service's operational hours.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) In total, there were five children's toilets and six adjacent wash hand basins in place. A nappy changing facility was also available to accommodate any child who may require same.

Non-Compliance Information

(e) There was an insufficient number of staff toilets and wash hand basins available. The service's staff toilet facility consisted of one toilet and one wash hand basin. However, 1 toilet and 1 wash hand basin are required for every 8 adults and there were 14 adults working at the setting on the morning of the inspection. This included the registered provider and three students.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The response outlined that the service will no longer take work experience students and this will reduce the number of adults on the premises. From next September, the service will consider the number of children attending who require AIM support, as this is also having an impact on the number of staff required. Going forward, it will be ensured that no more than eight staff are on the premises at one time.

Supporting documentation submitted

A screen shot of an email sent to a college student coordinator, outlining that the service would no longer be accommodating students.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider is accepted in meeting the requirements of the regulation.