

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN030
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Name of Service:	Kiddies Den Montessori LTD
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Address of Service:	Cloncovid, Kilcogy, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	N39 TC98
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Name of Registered Provider:	Philomena Lynch
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	31/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	18
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Kiddies Den Montessori Ltd is a privately owned service which commenced in 1998. The service operates from a converted 2 storey dwelling located in the rural area of Kilcogy Co. Cavan. The service provides full day care, part-time and sessional services to children aged 0- 6 years, operating 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, catering for a maximum of 35 children. The service partakes in the ECCE scheme from 9:30am – 12:30pm.

Downstairs comprises of 3 care rooms, named the Baby Room, Toddler Room and Montessori 1. There is a kitchen area off Montessori 1, children’s sanitary accommodation, a sleep room and a staff toilet on the ground floor.

Upstairs there are 3 care rooms; Montessori 2, a room with additional interest areas where the children could play, a school age room, an office and sanitary accommodation. There are outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the building and 2 outdoor cabins. Car parking is available to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 8 staff. Six staff which includes the registered provider are employed to care for the children. One adult is employed on work experience and one adult carried out cooking duties and cared for school age children.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and Regulation 25 First Aid. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 on 04 February 2025 in relation to no Garda Vetting available for one staff member. An adequate response was received from the registered provider on 04 February 2025. The required Garda vetting was received by the inspector on 07 February 2025.

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 service had a designated person in charge who is the registered provider, and a named person available to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(2) The staff files for 8 staff were reviewed.

(a) A total of 9 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

(b) A total of 7 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 7 staff. In respect of the Garda Vetting documents available, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for these 7 employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for 8 staff demonstrated that no staff had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. Therefore, no police vetting was required.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 6 staff employed to work directly with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A qualification for 2 staff was not required, as one adult was employed on a work experience capacity and one staff was employed for cooking duties and to work with school aged children.

Non-Compliance Information

(9) (2) (c)

One Garda vetting disclosure was unavailable for one adult. An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on 04 February 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Garda Vetting has been sourced. Registered provider has set a reminder set to update garda vetting every 3 years.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of Garda vetting submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 9 (2) (c).

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced.

The following adult to child ratios were observed:

One adult cared for 2 children aged 6 months to 1 year 6 months in the Baby Room.

One adult cared for 4 children aged 2 years to 2 years 4 months in the Toddler Room.

Two adults cared for 10 children aged 4 to 5 years in Montessori 1.

One adult cared for 8 children aged 2 years 11 months to 3 years 10 months in Montessori 2.

In addition to the above, one adult on work experience was present in Montessori 1, and one adult was carrying out cooking duties.

(8) A review of the staff rosters and staff sign in and out records, demonstrated that there are at least 2 adults on the premises while the full day care service is in operation.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the children’s learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

The children take in their own drinks and snacks from home for the morning and afternoon snack times, and the hot meal is provided and cooked on site by the service. The hot meal on the day of inspection was potato waffles and fish fingers. Children drinks were readily available in each of the care rooms during the day. The children in the Montessori rooms were observed to join and have their second snack outdoors on the day of inspection. The older children were observed to use the toilet independently with adult support provided where needed. Toilets were provided on the ground floor and upstairs, with an additional toilet available and in use in one of the outdoor cabins. Nappy changing occurs in line with the children’s routines. Spare clothing was available for the children, and aprons were provided for messy play and water activities. The children in the Toddler and Montessori rooms took part in outdoor play and were observed to be dressed appropriately for the weather on the day. Rest areas included mats and cushions with blankets provided in all care rooms to allow children the opportunity to take time out to rest during their day. The children in attendance in the baby room were mobile, and explored their own care room during play time, and visited the Toddler room at snack and meal times.

Supporting Relationships

The staff demonstrated sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children through use of soft gentle tones while interacting with the children and recognising and acknowledging children’s own individual preferences. The staff were observed to use the one-to-one time during nappy changing to engage in conversation with the children. The staff were observed to help children find positive solutions to problems that occurred during their play, such as turn taking and sharing of toys using comments such as use “gentle hands” and “we can share”. Conversations between staff and children were observed about the children’s home life, demonstrating a strong relationship and awareness among the staff and children of the children’s lives outside of the service. Communication with families is in person at arrival and collection time, with notebooks in use and completed daily for the younger children. The staff team were observed to work well together which ensured that the transitions from different activities and routines were smooth.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor care rooms are bright and welcoming. A variety of mirrors, artificial leaves and bunting were hung in each of the care rooms. Children’s art work, along with some themed posters to include “our community”, birthday charts and family and pet photos were on display throughout the service.

The Baby room had space for the babies to take part in floor play activities. Soft floor mats and cushions along with a teepee provided soft comfortable areas for the babies to play and learn. Pull up equipment to encourage the babies to begin to stand such as a block table was provided. A texture board, rocker, sorting and stacking toys, animals and sensory bottles were among the play materials readily available to the babies.

There were defined interest areas in the Toddler room to include a home corner with play equipment, a teepee area with books and teddies, dress up and role play materials, creative area, white board, dolls and prams, jigsaws, animals, trucks and sorting toys available to the children.

The Montessori 1 and 2 rooms were laid out with similar interest areas to include a large variety of Montessori equipment, cosy corner with books, home corner with equipment, food boxes and containers and real food items to include carrots and onions. Jigsaws, sorting activities and farm with animals was also available. A sensory winter area to include animals and cotton wool was on display in Montessori 1. The materials in each care room were accessible to the children, and where items were stored on higher shelving the adults assisted the children with their choices.

There were two outdoor play areas provided. The area located directly of the Toddler room had a ground surface of concrete and tarmac with a slide and soft ground mat, a play house, ride on and push along toys, wooden logs, table and chairs and a sand tray available for children’s use. The larger area located to the rear and side of the premises used by the older children had ground surfacing of soft mats, tarmac and concrete. A covered gravel area and two cabins were also provided in this area. The outdoor area was spacious and had a play kitchen where children were observed to make “tea”, a construction area with ride on trucks and blocks, a water tray with animals was set up, a tuff tray with coloured rice and containers, a small play house and sand pit was also available.

One cabin had mirrored walls where children were observed to take part in yoga stretches, physical activity games and play with balloons. The second cabin had play areas to include kitchen area, dolls and equipment, tool bench, dinosaurs, hairdressing toys, a play shop, trucks and mats.

Programme of Activities

The children were observed to be engaged in a variety of activities on the day of inspection. Notes were on display of children's likes and current interests which were incorporated into the curriculum planning and play environments in each of the care rooms.

The children in the Baby room were observed to enjoy floor play with the staff member, with interactions including talking and singing, and playing with balls and blocks observed.

The Toddlers sang the incy wincy rhyme and had "tickle time" play where they displayed happiness and laughter throughout. The Toddlers were also observed to engage in and enjoy play time in their outdoor area.

In the mornings upon arrival both Montessori rooms meet for circle time to include songs and stories, and then move to their own care rooms.

The children in Montessori 1 were observed to enjoy "making dinner and soup" in the home corner. The staff provided the children with age-appropriate materials to cut food to include bananas, carrots and onions.

Discussions about a child's birthday party occurred, and the staff discussed with the child about recording this in their folder. Floor play with shapes and letters and sorting activities were observed to be popular indoors, with a "making tea" water activity, yoga time and construction play in the outdoors also proving popular.

The children in Montessori 2 were observed to listen to a story about books and a dog, where the staff member sat on the mat with the children ensuring all children could see the book. The staff member followed the child's lead and built upon this when discussions about the "sad dog" occurred during the story.

The children in all care rooms were observed to make their own choice in their indoor and outdoor learning environments and were noted to actively seek out the staff for support if needed.

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:

The following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The main entrance door was locked upon the inspectors arrival. Garden areas were secured by fencing and lockable gates.
- The children were adequately supervised during the inspection.

- The resources used by the children were observed to be maintained in good repair.
- Windows on the first floor had safety restrictors in place and in use.
- Floor coverings appeared in good condition. Stair gates were fitted at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of the children.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal operated bins and paper towels were available for handwashing in each sanitary area.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated through openable windows.
- Children snacks taken in from home that contained perishable items were stored in the fridge.
- Cleaning schedules were in place. The service was presented in a clean condition.

Safe Sleep:

- A sleep room was available for children under 2 years. Five cots with safety mattresses and waterproof coverings were provided. Individual bed sheets and blankets were used for each child.
- Sleep records were available for review which included the child's name, room temperature, position, colour and breathing pattern at 10-minute intervals with staff signature.
- Three stackable beds were available in the sleep room for use of children aged over 2 years if they required a sleep during their time in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Two children's lunches contained whole grapes. Whole grapes pose a choking risk to children. It is acknowledged that when the inspector brought this to the attention of the staff, the grapes were cut for the children.

Infection Control:

2. The walls in the toilet area in the outdoor cabin had damp patches rising from the ground. The registered provider advised the inspector they recently had a burst pipe and acknowledged the walls were due to be repaired.
3. On the day of inspection, the nappy changing procedures observed posed a risk of cross contamination. In the nappy changing area on the ground floor of the premises there was no designated nappy bin provided. The staff advised the inspector that soiled nappies were placed into a secure bin outside.

4. The staff were observed to walk through the Toddler room with the bagged soiled nappy while wearing the apron that was used for the nappy changing procedures, to put the soiled items in the bin.
5. Nappy changing materials were observed within one of the outdoor cabins. Staff advised the inspector that this area is used if required while in the outdoors. The area is not suitable for nappy changing practises as the area is used as a play area by the children. In addition, there was no second-hand wash sink provided.
6. Stackable beds were observed within one of the outdoor cabins. Staff advised the inspector that the older children if they needed a sleep could use this area. This area is not suitable for sleep as the temperature in the cabin was 10.4°C on the day of inspection, which is below the recommended temperature of 18 - 22°C.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Registered provider sent a message on messaging group to all parents reminding them to cut grapes. Lunch boxes will be inspected by staff members daily.

Infection Control:

2. The toilet wall in play shed has been replaced and varnished. The pipe work will be inspected weekly during frosty weather.
3. The outdoor bin has been relocated to the side of the premises. A larger nappy bin has been made available in the nappy changing area.
4. All nappy changing materials are for role play in the outdoor play-shed.
5. Stackable beds are for role play e.g. hospital. The beds have been removed as play hospital is not a current interest of the children. Sleep areas are indoors only.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of repaired walls and a new nappy bin in place.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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 a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. The registered provider was on site and held in-date FAR training.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

The first aid box did not contain sufficient materials for the number of children in attendance. Items were noted to have passed their expiry date which included eye patches, sterile dressings, and bandages.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

First Aid boxes have been updated. Reminder set to replenish expired items.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of online order.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 25 (2) (a) (b).