

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN037		
Name of Service:	Little Friends Montessori		
Address of Service:	2/ 3 Cathedral View, Cavan, Co. Cavan		
Eircode:	H12 N478		
Name of Registered Provider:	Teresa Leddy		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	18/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	83	PM -
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna & M Mc Donnell		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
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		

Description of service

Little Friends Montessori is a privately owned service, which commenced in 2008 and provides a sessional service to children aged 2 - 6years. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 110 children.

This service is located in a housing estate in Cavan town and operates from the ground floor of two converted houses in No.2 and No. 3 Cathedral View. One house comprised of 2 care rooms namely the Jungle Room and the Natural Room; and there is also sanitary accommodation, a cloak room, a kitchenette, a sensory area, and an office. In the second house there are 4 care rooms named the Farm Room, Cairde Beaga year 1, Cairde Beaga year 2 and the Fairy Garden Room. Additionally, there is sanitary accommodation and a cloak room/office. Four designated outdoor areas were provided for children's use. Car parking is available to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs 17 staff including the registered provider and person in charge. Sixteen staff are employed to work directly with the children, and one staff member carries out caretaking duties.

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, Regulation 25: First Aid and Regulation 28: Insurance. However, on inspection additional non-compliances which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16: Record in relation to Pre-school Service and Regulation 29: Premises, these findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19: Health, Welfare & Development of Child, as a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms named: Jungle Room, the Fairy Garden and Cairde Beaga year 2.

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 inspectors wish 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 service manager, and a named person in charge to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge and 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.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through the display of a staff roster.

(2) The staff files for 17 adults were reviewed.

(a) A total of 26 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

- (b) A total of 8 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 17 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.
- (d) A review of the employment history for the 17 staff, demonstrated that 6 staff had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the 6 staff was available on file.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 16 staff employed to work 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 one staff member was not required.

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:
- Two adults cared for 22 children in the Jungle Room.
 - Two adults cared for 20 children in the Fairy Garden Room.
 - Three adults cared for 14 children in Cairde Beaga Year 1.
 - Two adults cared for 11 children in Cairde Beaga Year 2.
 - Two adults cared for 16 children in the Farm Room.

The Natural room was not in use on the day of inspection.

The children present were aged between 2 years 5 months to 5 years.

In addition to the above, the registered provider was on site and assisted in the care rooms where 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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (h) Attendance records of the children in the Fairy Garden room on the day of the inspection were inaccurate. One child was not signed in on the attendance records.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Having the child on the premises was a once off and reassurances are given it won't occur again. Service will ensure that all children are signed in on the attendance records, this will be achieved through clear communication, regular head counts and checks ensuring they match what's registered on the daily register.

Supporting documentation submitted

None submitted.

Summary Comment

The assurances provided by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 16 (1) (h).

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

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19: Health, Welfare & Development of Child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection observed care practises in three out of the six care rooms.

The rooms named Jungle Room, the Fairy Garden and Cairde Beaga year 2 were observed on this inspection.

Basic Needs

The atmosphere during the inspector's initial walk around in the service was warm and welcoming, and the children were observed to be engaged in play activities with their peers while being actively supported by the staff. The children attending the Jungle Room and Cairde Beaga year 2 were observed to use the outdoor area during the inspection and were dressed appropriately for the weather.

The children take in their own snack and drink each day, and the snack times were observed to be relaxed with the children engaging in conversations with their peers and the staff. The children's drinks were available in the care rooms throughout the day. Children's snacks included a variety of bread rolls, sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, crackers, cheeses, and yogurts.

The children were observed to use the toilet independently by themselves, with staff providing supports if needed. Children's appearances were cared for with aprons for messy play activities and spare clothing was available. Encouragement of self-care practises were observed for example staff, encouraged the children to clean their noses and wash their hands.

There were rest areas provided in the care rooms which included soft mat areas with cushions, where children were observed to take time out from their play and relax and read books.

Supporting Relationships

The children appeared familiar with the staff who cared for them. The staff were observed to act as positive role models for the children, using praise and encouragement where positive interactions were observed. The staff spoke using gentle tones and addressed each child by their name. The staff were observed to use age-appropriate strategies to help children find positive solutions to any problems that occurred during their play.

Staff demonstrated sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families. The staff team respected parental wishes, and the children's own individual needs where specific requirements for any individual care plans were in place.

Communication with parents is upon arrival and collection times, with weekly emails sent out to each individual care room with relevant updates that include what activities the children had participated in that week. The staff team were observed to communicate and work well together, ensuring transitions from play to snack times and outdoor time were smooth with no interruptions observed.

Physical And Material Environment

The Jungle Room, the Fairy Garden and the Cairde Beaga year 2 room had similar designed play areas provided. Cosy corners with books and cushions, well-resourced home corners, role play stations such as doctors and vets with appropriate play equipment, dolls and houses, small world people with playhouses, cars and garages and construction benches were some of the equipment and areas provided.

The walls and ceilings were decorated with teddies, artificial plants, lights, birthday charts, family photos and many creative pieces of the children's artwork were on display throughout the service.

The daily routines and the equipment available in the care rooms provided many rich learning experiences for the children. The resources available promoted cognitive development through a wide selection of connecting, building and placement toys. Sensory play was promoted through a variety of wooden and plastic fidget toys, with activities such as paint and sand play also available. The children's language development was encouraged through the use of songs, rhymes, and stories. Song and story time was observed in Cairde Beaga year 2 where children were encouraged to participate, for example each individual child was asked to pick the animals for the 'Old McDonald' song. Physical play was promoted when the children from the Jungle room took part in outdoor play. A role play area for "the vets" was set up in the Fairy Garden where children were observed to use their imagination during the role play activity.

A darkened sensory room to include soft lighting, sensory toys, a climbing and bounce area, music and equipment was located to the rear of the premises. This room was observed to be used on the day of inspection.

There are four outdoor areas provided for children's use, two of which are covered areas. Ground surfacing included a variety of soft play surfacing, concrete, and artificial grass. The two covered areas, located to the rear and in between house no.2 and no.3 had play equipment to include musical toys, a low-level wooden seesaw, texture boards, seats and benches, sensory tray with stones and trucks, a play kitchen with leaves and herbs and a sand tray with play equipment. The two uncovered areas to the front of the premises included a teepee, tyres, climbing and balancing equipment, ride on toys and footballs. The outdoor play areas were well laid out, spacious and suitable for the number of children present on the day of inspection. The uncovered outdoor areas to the front of the premises were observed to be used by the children on the day of inspection.

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:

- Upon the inspector's arrival the premises was appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. The designated garden areas were secured by walls and fencing with lockable gates.
- A visitor log was maintained, and the inspectors were requested to sign in upon arrival and sign out upon departure.
- The children were observed to be adequately supervised both in the indoor and outdoor play environments during the inspection.
- The staff advised the inspector if children took in whole grapes or cherry tomatoes, they were sent home with a note attached as they are not permitted within the setting due to being a choking hazard. This practise was observed on the day of inspection, where the child's grapes were sent home.
- Toys and equipment within the indoor and outdoor learning environments were maintained in good repair.
- Storage areas were inaccessible to the children. Cleaning agents were stored up high out of the reach of children.
- Fire exits were observed to remain unobstructed during the inspection.

Infection Control:

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

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal operated bins and electric hand dryers were available at each hand wash basin. Hand washing was observed in practise by the children before snack times, after using the toilet and after painting activities.
- The children's snacks which included perishable items were stored in the fridge until snack time.
- Waste bins were stored in a designated area in the outdoors.
- The sanitary areas were well ventilated through means of openable windows.
- Cleaning schedules and records were completed and up to date. The toys, resources, and the service facilities throughout were presented in a clean and hygienic manner.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The wall mounted radiators in the two outdoor toilets had a surface temperature of above 50°C, this poses a risk of injury to a child. It is acknowledged the outdoor toilets were not in use on the day of inspection.

In addition, one radiator surface temperature in the Jungle Room had a surface temperature that exceeded 50°C.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Outdoor Toilets (Natural Room) was closed and not in use on the 18.2.25. Jungle Room Radiator was turned down with immediate effect, and photographic evidence was submitted by email. The service will ensure the radiator temperatures are recorded throughout the day to ensure the temperature does not rise from when the temperature is recorded in early morning.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of reduced radiator temperatures.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance 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. Eight staff, three of whom were present on the day of the inspection held in-date FAR training certificates.
- (2) (a) & (b)
- Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available throughout the two premises and were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 110 pre-school children attending the service on a Sessional basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28/03/2024 to 27/03/2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,*

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The floor surface in the outdoor toilets were partially covered with vinyl floor covering. A section to the rear of each toilet had a concrete surface which could not be adequately cleaned.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Action was taken with immediate effect with the floor covering replaced on the 18.2.25 in the afternoon. This will be monitored through carrying out risk assessments and any damage to floor covering will be replaced or mended with immediate effect.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of new floor covering.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 29.