

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW023
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Name of Service:	Little Learners Montessori
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Address of Service:	Phelan Street, Rathvilly, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 HK20
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Molloy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Little Learners Montessori is an early childhood care and education (ECCE) sessional service which is located on Phelan Street in the centre of the village of Rathvilly, in north county Carlow.

The service operates from an end two-storey terraced house on Phelan Street and includes a classroom on the ground floor with an enclosed outdoor play area the back door of the premises.

Staffing

There are three staff employed in the service including the registered provider. All three staff members hold qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 7 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 10 -policies, Procedures etc. Of Pre-School Service,

Regulation 15 -Record of a Pre-School Child,

Regulation 17- Information for Parents,

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Regulation 23- Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of Child,
Regulation 27 – Supervision.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the classroom and outdoor play area.

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

A referral regarding a non-compliance under regulation 26 fire safety measures was sent to the local authority.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 present on the day of inspection and there was a second named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The inspector was informed by the registered provider that while the preschool service is in operation, the registered provider or the named deputy designated person in charge are always onsite in the service.

(c) In the entrance hall where parents met with the staff transitioning their children in and out of the service, there was a poster with each staff's name, qualification, role and responsibility displayed.

(2) Staff files for the three staff members were reviewed by the inspector and the following observations found.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (a)(b) There were two validated references available in each of the two staff members, from either a past employer or reputable source in the case of a person who had no past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosure certificates were on file for each of the staff employed in the service including registered provider. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required as no member had lived outside of the state for a period of six months or longer.
- (4) Certificates of accredited qualifications were available in each of the staff members files demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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 policies as specified in Schedule 5 were available for inspection in the service. The inspector found the policies and procedures to be adequate in content and appropriate to the sessional service provided.

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) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) There were three qualified staff members present with 14 pre-school children aged 3 years 6 months to 5 years.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(3) The records of the pre-school children attending the service were available for inspection in the service by the persons referred to in (3)(a)-(c).

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On review of a sample of 12 records of pre-school children attending the service, the following information was not recorded in some of the records presented for inspection.

The date on which the child commenced in the service was not recorded clearly on the registration form.

A record of confirmation as to whether two children had been immunised or not was not recorded in two registration forms.

On one child's registration form there were no details of whether the child had any medical needs.

One registration form had no details of the child's registered medical practitioner.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider responded with the following corrective and preventive actions.

A review of all children's enrolment records was conducted immediately following the inspection. The missing immunisation record were emailed to me when child was registered. Please find attached the copy of it. The second missing one I did not retrieve from the parent after numerous reminders that I needed it and then it was just forgotten about. I still have not received it. The dates in which the children commence will be recorded more clearly going forward. The Registered Medical Practitioners details for the other child were recorded the very next day after the inspection. Please see photo attached.

The Service has implemented a new enrolment record/registration form to ensure all required information is completed before a child's enrolment is finalised with a checklist at the end making sure everything is received, dated and signed off correctly. Please find attached a copy of it

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of required documentation.

Copy of new registration form.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions addressed the non-compliances identified. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

In conversation with the registered provider and staff present, the inspector was informed that prior to children commencing in the pre-school service at the start of the ECCE year, parents are provided with a “Welcome Letter” which provided information about the type of service, the staff working in the service and their qualifications and an outline of the management structure in the service. Documented information is also provided to parents on the items that they should bring to pre-school with them, such as a spare set of clothes, appropriate outdoor wear, wellies and slippers for indoor wear, a packed lunch appropriate to the provided healthy eating policy, a bottle of water, and family photograph. Information is provided regarding the time of the session, drop off and collection procedures in line with the service’s authorisation to collect policy.

The registered provider explained that the service holds a coffee morning in August for children commencing in the service at the end of August, start of September, for parents and children to familiarise themselves with the service. The registered provider explained that for a settling-in period, the children can attend the service for reduced hours between 09:00 to 11:00 hours and arrangements are made with parents regarding what is the best for each individual child. Parents are supported with completion of any necessary forms and their registration forms. Information is provided on planned curricular activities, the results of which parents can view on an ongoing basis, with the child’s weekly projects displayed in the large window at the front of the building. Each child’s individual learning journal goes home with them every week for parents to see the documented records of their learning and experiences in the service, as well as any personal individual photos are sent home to the child’s parents.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 service was secured at the main entrance with a half metal gate in front of the main entrance door, which was secured internally with a twist turn lock.

A call bell system was in place for any visitors to the service and the staff could clearly view any callers to the service via the window in the hall or the window in the classroom. The outdoor play area at the back of the building was secured with a ten-foot-high metal fence and a tight secured large gate at the back of the yard. The inspector observed that cleaning materials and equipment were safely stored away from and inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

There were two children's toilets and one adult toilet provided in the service to meet the needs of the children attending the service, and the adults employed in the service.

Child height handwash basins were supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

Staff were observed to support and prompt the children to wash their hands correctly after using the toilet, nappy-changing, after messy and outdoor play, and before snack times.

Administration of Medication:

No medications were required to be administered in the service at the time of inspection. Staff provided the inspector with information in relation to where medicines are safely stored when required and were well informed regarding the safe administration procedures of any prescribed, emergency or anti-febrile medication in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Outing:

The service had a policy of not operating outings away from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

General Safety:

1. On arrival to the service the inspector observed a photocopier with an electrical cable in the centre of the classroom floor which posed a trip hazard to the children in the service. It is acknowledged that the photocopier was promptly removed by the staff.
2. The inspector observed that the electrical cable of a kettle, stored on a narrow shelf could potentially be reached by the children and pulled down upon a child causing a physical injury.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The following response was submitted by the registered provider.

This had been temporarily left on the floor momentarily as all the children were outside on this day. It was promptly removed as staff was aware of it being a hazard. It has since then been left out of reach of children making sure that children cannot reach cables or printer. On the day of this inspection, the inspector recommended an office space where all office material will be stored safely away from the children.

Work will be carried out during the summer break, a space will be turned into an office space for electrical supplies and files for staff only, where a stair gate is going to be used so children cannot access.

All electrical equipment was removed straight away. This equipment was left here temporarily, none of it had been used as it was just brought to the service, it has all been stored away safely until safety shelving and storage space in the kitchen area is carried out in the summer. When the work is carried out, I can take a photograph as proof and send it to you.

Removing equipment to safety and been more careful of visible cables and wires are out of reach of children and not been hazardous to any person in the premises

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of removed equipment.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider are appropriate to address the non-compliances identified. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) There were two staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children.
- The registered provider demonstrated that there were at least two staff members with FAR training present in the service while preschool children were in attendance.
- (2) (a)(b) A first aid bag was easily accessible on a shelf in the classroom, if a staff member required it for a child.

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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(1) The following fire safety records were maintained.

(a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 18 May 2026, before the service closed for the summer.

(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire or for a fire drill was displayed in the classroom.

Non-Compliance Information

(b) While a record of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment was maintained and last recorded as having taken place in September 2025, the service had not maintained a record of the smoke alarm checks since the last inspection. A referral has been set to the local authority.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following response was submitted by the registered provider.

During monthly fire drill checks, smoke alarms are always checked to make sure they are working as we use them to start the fire drill, I did not note this on the monthly fire drill records which I was unaware that I should have.

I will make sure that all information is recorded going forward to be compliant. A fire safety contractor visits yearly to service and maintain equipment and smoke alarms.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions implemented and the outcome of a review by the local fire authority will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The registered provider and staff in the service ensured that all children were appropriately always supervised throughout the inspection. All staff were suitably qualified, and the registered provider and the manager had over 10 years' experience working directly with children. The child staff ratios exceeded the requirements for care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

The inspector observed that drop off and collection of children was carefully supervised by the registered provider. The metal half gate on the outside of the entrance door provided an extra safety feature during the transition of children in and out of the service and allowed opportunity for a timely exchange of information on the child's morning in the service.

In the outdoor play area, the inspector observed that the three staff members strategically positioned themselves at different points in the area to ensure all activities and interactions were monitored and supported if required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a sessional childcare service for up to 22 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2026 to the 27 March 2027.