

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW026
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Name of Service:	Little Trinity Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	Montessori School, 17A Chapelstown Gate, Tullow Road, Carlow, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 HN52
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Name of Registered Provider:	Brenda Fitzgerald
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/07/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and 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).	

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Little Trinity Creche and Montessori is a privately owned early years childcare service located on the outskirts of Carlow town. The service offers sessional, part-time and full day childcare services to children aged 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 07:00 to 18:00 hours which includes a sessional service from 09:00 to 12:00 hours. The service is also registered to provide a school age service which operates from a purpose-built wooden cabin to the back of the premises.

The service has four classrooms on the ground floor of the house, as well as a designated sleep room, kitchen area and sanitary facilities. A staff room and office are located on the first floor within the service, while the remainder of the first floor is a private apartment, which is accessed by a separate entrance.

Staffing

There were 14 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider, designated person in charge and a kitchen staff member. All staff members employed in the service to work directly with the preschool children held qualifications from Level 5 to Level 8 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 a Pre-School Service,

Regulation 19 – Health, Welfare and Development of Child,

Regulation 20 - Facilities for Rest and Play, and

Regulation 23 -Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the “Tweeney”/ Wobbler Room, Playgroup Room, Montessori Junior Room, and Montessori Senior Room.

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 on the day of inspection regarding Regulation 23, the absence of First Aid Responder trained staff in the service and the significant risk that this posed to the children in the service.

An adequate response was submitted by the registered provider on the 29 June 2024.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the designated person in charge, 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*
- (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 inspector observed that there was a designated person in charge in the service. A named deputy designated person in charge, was also available to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection. The registered provider arrived in the service in the afternoon.

(c) A clear management structure was observed in practice which was also clearly displayed in the entrance area. The roles and responsibilities of each staff member employed in the service were outlined for parents and authorised visitors to see.

(2) Staff files for 14 staff members were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the 14 staff members, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates had been obtained for each staff member employed in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no staff member employed in the service had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualification for each staff member, were available for review by the inspector. The documents provided, demonstrated that all staff working directly with the children, held at least the minimum Level 5 ranging to Level 8 qualifications in early childhood care and education, 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

On review of the service's policies, the designated person in charge assured the inspector that all the required documents specified in Schedule 5 were available and open for inspection. The service's policies were communicated to any new staff, as part of their induction process prior to commencing employment and were revised by the registered provider on an annual basis. The registered provider confirmed that staff were involved in policy review and requested annually to revise any policy changes made to exiting policy and procedures in the service. Policies and procedures were observed to have been documented as having been reviewed in April 2024.

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) The inspector observed that there was an adequate number of staff members directly caring for and supervising the children in attendance on the day of inspection.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children as required by schedule 6 was maintained as follows.

In the “Tweeney” room there were 5 children, aged 1 to 2 years, directly cared for by 1 staff member, for a full day care service.

In the Playgroup room there were 7 children, aged 2 to 3 years being cared for and supervised by 2 staff members.

In the afternoon there were 5 children aged 2 to 3 years cared for with two staff members.

In the Montessori Junior room, 6 children aged 3 to 4 years were cared for by one staff member throughout the day.

In the Montessori Senior room there were 6 children aged 4 to 5 years of age cared for by one staff member throughout the day.

In ECCE Room 1, there were 8 preschool children aged 4 to 6 years of age and 5 school aged children cared for and supervised by 2 staff members and in the afternoon, there were 6 preschool children and 5 school aged directly supervised by 2 staff members.

The designated person in charge was available throughout the day, providing relief in classrooms for staff breaks and helping wherever required. The designated person in charge also covered the kitchen duties on the day of inspection as the designated kitchen staff member was not on duty.

The designated person in charge facilitated the inspection process until the registered provider arrived onsite in the afternoon.

(8) The designated person in charge ensured that there were always at least two staff members on the premises. The inspector observed that the staff roster and past staff rosters available reflected this.

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) The inspector observed the following through direct observation of practices in the childcare service, on review of practices and policies and in discussion with staff:

BASIC NEEDS

In each of the classrooms, there were water stations provided on low level shelves for the older children who had access to fresh drinking water from their own individual bottles or beakers and glasses provided by the service. In the Tweenies room children's individual beakers were distributed to them at regular intervals to avoid children drinking from one another's beaker.

Throughout the inspection day, which was hot and sunny, the staff were observed to monitor and promote the children to take regular drinks, indoors and outdoors.

Prior to going outside children had suncream applied, if they had not had it applied at home prior to coming to the service and sunhats were encouraged.

Staff were observed to be conscious of children's comfort on the day ensuring they were cool and supported with going to the toilet regularly due to their increased intake of fluids.

Nappy changing was facilitated as required and staff had access to two nappy changing facilities in the service.

Staff were observed to speak softly and gently to younger children during nappy changing procedures, explaining each step to the child as they carried out the procedure in line with the service's nappy changing policy.

Individual children's personal care was attended to as occasions of runny noses or messy mouths post snack time and meal arose. Children's noses or mouths were wiped with moist tissues or wipes in a gentle manner, and hand

washing was encouraged and monitored by staff prior to meal and snack times and post toileting, outdoor play and messy play.

Children's individual sleep needs were met as staff observed them displaying cues of tiredness. Children slept at varying times according to their needs.

Snacks and meals were provided by the service. Children sat together at mealtimes, enjoying each other's company and engaged in conversations with the staff caring for them who also sat and supported them.

The inspector observed that for morning snack, children attending the sessional service bought their own snacks from home, while children attending for the full day care or part-time service were provided with toast/ rice cakes, and a variety of fruit, apples, bananas and blueberries.

On Fridays the children informed the inspector that they always had a treat of chicken nuggets, chips and baked beans, with ice cream and in the evening, they had homemade pizzas.

The service displayed their menu plans in the main hall for parents to see with details of each dish or snack's ingredient contents. A selection of snacks and evening meals which were baked onsite by the chef, included the following options, madeira cake with stewed apple, banana bread, carrot cake, sausage rolls, chocolate brownies, pancakes, fruit crumble, raspberry and blueberry scones, lemon cake, blueberry soda bread, beans on toast, quiche, pasta and cheese, ham rolls and yogurt. Main meals included the following options, chicken casserole, lasagne, spaghetti bolognese, beef stew, shepherd's pie, fish cakes, roast beef or roast chicken dinner, chicken and ham pie or chicken and ham pie.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

During the meals, staff were observed to sit with the children and engage in social conversations about home and activities, helping the children to relax and enjoy their snacks and meals. Staff demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in supporting children who needed some extra help at mealtimes or during toileting, ensuring the children felt comfortable and confident. In the tweenies and playgroup rooms staff were observed to speak softly and calmly to children if conflicts arose and encouraged the children to be kind to each other and engage positively in play activities by sharing and taking turns.

Positive behaviour was praised, and children demonstrated a sense of pride on being acknowledged for being kind, helpful or for their achievements in the activities that they were involved in.

Children that were upset and sought comfort from the staff members looking after them, were met with prompt and reassuring responses in the forms of cuddles, and soothing words of comfort.

Parents and guardians were kept informed of children’s progress daily with summaries of each child’s day provided to parents or guardians at collection time.

The inspector observed that there were opportunities for siblings to interact with each other in the outdoor area where they chatted over the wooden fence that separated the junior and senior outdoor play areas.

As the day progressed and where the adult to child ratio allowed, siblings were allowed visit their siblings in the younger classrooms.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENTS

Each of the four classrooms provided clear identifiable play areas such as kitchen/home areas, construction areas, rest areas, dress-up areas, sensory play to invite and encourage children to play. In the older classrooms, shelving provided a range of specialist Montessori equipment. Low level shelving in each classroom provided resources for manipulative and connective play such as blocks, magnets, jigsaws and peg boards to promote children’s fine motor skills.

The outdoor area which provided each class with the opportunity of daily outdoor play, was divided into two sections, one area for the older preschool children which had a tarmacadam surface and the other, with an artificial grass surface, for the younger children attending the “Tweeney” and play group rooms.

Large clean tyres were used for children to sit on and chat or to provide opportunities for challenging physical play as children climbed over or through them.

A covered over area provided shelter for an outdoor classroom and shade.

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 entrance to the service was secured with a keypad call system. Staff were able to view any parents or visitors approaching the service from the windows of the classroom or kitchen, and through a glass panel in the entrance door, prior to answering the door. Both entrances at the gable ends of the building were secured with locked gates and a high cement wall surrounded the outdoor area and back of the service.

This assisted in preventing any child from exiting the service unsupervised and ensuring that no unauthorised person could enter the premises.

A daily risk assessment of the outdoor play area was carried out and a record of each assessment maintained in the service.

All cleaning materials and liquids were stored in designated storage areas safely out of the reach of children

Infection Control:

The service had an adequate infection control policy in place. The inspector observed that hand washing was carried out by both staff and the children, prior to mealtimes, after using tissues to blow noses, after messy and outdoor play.

Toileting and nappy changing were supported by staff and carried out in line with both the toileting and nappy changing policies contained in the service's infection control policy,

Cleaning schedules were displayed in each classroom and demonstrated that these were recorded daily by the staff present.

Administration of Medication:

In discussion with staff and on review of a sample of administration of medication forms, the inspector was assured that administration of medication procedures were carried out in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Any children requiring prescribed medication in the event of an emergency had clearly outlined individual administration of medication plans which staff had completed in conjunction with the individual child's parents and received the required training for from parents.

Safe Sleep:

A designated sleep room was provided in the service which contained five standard cots for children aged under two years. The cots were observed to be spaced adequately apart at 50 cm or more. The room was ventilated with a mechanical wall vent. A thermometer was available in the sleep room recording the room temperature. The staff caring for the children were observed to place children to sleep in position, in line with safe sleep guidelines and in cool clothing as the outside temperature on the day of inspection was recorded as ranging from 20 to 21°C. Staff were observed to check sleeping children at ten-minute intervals recording each child's sleep position, colour and breathing. Nine sleep mats were also available for any children over two years of age who wished to sleep during their time at the service.

Outing:

An adequate outings policy was in place in the service, if the service arranged an outing or trip away from the service. The policy clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of staff and management in relation to the preparation for an outing away from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A potential safety risk was observed on the floor of the raised stage in the outdoor play area. The inspector observed that the nail heads on the floor of the stage were now raised due to wear and tear of the floor of the stage. This was observed to present a potential risk of injury to a child.
2. On inspection of the first aid pack in the playgroup room, the inspector observed that there was an ampoule of eye wash in the contents which had expired.

Infection Control:

1. The inspector observed that the mattress in each of the two cots on the right-hand side of the entrance door to the sleep room, from the main corridor, were both stained with grey- brown discolouration. This posed a potential risk of cross infection to the children using them.

First Aid:

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider in relation to a non-compliance that is reported on under Regulation 25.

Safe Sleep:

1. At 10:30 hours the inspector observed that the room thermometer recorded the sleep room temperature as being 20.8°C. The inspector recorded the air temperature at 23.3°C on the calibrated air probe. Staff were observed to initiate the use of a mechanical room fan and opened a door onto the main corridor to increase circulation of cool air in response to observing the high temperature.

At 12:00 hours the inspector recorded the air temperature in the sleep room at 22°C. It is acknowledged that three children aged 1 to 2 years were sleeping in the room at the time. Staff were observed to physically check the children every ten minutes and had the children dressed in their vests with no blankets while sleeping.

At 14:00 hours the temperature in the sleep room was recorded as being 23°C. As no children were sleeping at the time staff were observed to open the doors leading into the sleep room and the doors leading from the sleep room to the outdoor area to promote air circulation and to cool the sleep room.

It is acknowledged that the room temperature was maintained at 22°C for the remainder of the evening, the outdoor temperature was recorded as being 20-21°C.

To maintain the required sleep room temperature between 18-22°C, as required by safe sleep guidance for children over one year of age, the inspector observed that the service required additional measures to be put in place to reduce the potential risk of the sleep room becoming too warm and children becoming too warm on days where outside temperatures exceeded 21°C.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted the following corrective and preventive actions.

General Safety

1. Outdoor playhouse has been repaired and new floor has been fitted. Playhouse has now been refurbished. Management will ensure repairs are always kept up to date.
2. All eye wash in the first aid pack in playgroup room was removed. New eye wash has been added to the first aid pack.

Infection Control:

1. Old mattresses were removed from cots and 3 new mattresses were replaced. Mattresses will be checked on an ongoing basis by staff and management.

First Aid:

Four staff members completed FAR training on the week of 9/9/24. Training was completed on the 13/09/2024. We will continue staff training in Far throughout the course of 2024 and 2025.

Safe Sleep:

New electric fan was purchased for the sleep room.
Temperatures in sleep room will be monitored every 10 minutes while children are sleeping.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence of repaired playhouse floor.

Safe Sleep:

Photographic evidence of new electric fan purchased.

Summary Comment

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

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

(2)(a) A first aid box was clearly observed and safely stored in the kitchen area of the service.

(b)The first aid box was always available for the children and smaller first aid packs were available in each of the four classrooms.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On review of staff files and in discussion with the designated person in charge, it was evident that no staff member employed in the service was qualified in Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) approved First Aid Responder (FAR) training, as is the regulatory requirement of the inspectorate. An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued under Regulation 23 for this safety risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An adequate response to the IAN was submitted by the registered provider on the 29 June 2024 confirming that four staff members were booked in for PHECC FAR training on the 19, 21, and 23 August 2024.

The following corrective and preventive action was submitted by the registered provider.

Four staff members completed FAR training on the week of 9/9/24. Training was completed on the 13/09/2024.

We will continue staff training in Far throughout the course of 2024 and 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of receipt for FAR training.

Copy of confirmation that four staff members had attended training.

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (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.
- (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

- (1)(a) A record of monthly fire drills carried out in the service was maintained by the registered provider. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 14 May 2024.
- (b) Records of the annual maintenance checks of the service's firefighting equipment and fire alarm system were maintained. The last maintenance check for the firefighting equipment and for the fire alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 26 June 2024.
- (2) All records relating to fire safety in the service were maintained onsite and open for inspection

(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed inside the entrance door. A fire assembly point was clearly signed in the outdoor play area.

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 full day childcare service for up to 60 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The maximum number of preschool children that the service can accommodate at any one time is 45 preschool children for the sessional period and 38 preschool children for full day care.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(a) The designated person in charge and registered provider reported no concerns regarding the structure of the service.

(b) The service was secured with a keypad system for entry and exit of the service, both gates at each gable end of the building were secured with locks. The outdoor play area was safely secured with a high cemented brick wall.

(c) Artificial lighting with safety covers was provided to supplement the natural lighting which entered the classrooms through the numerous windows in the service.

(e) Two nappy changing facilities were provided in the service for the "Tweeney" and playgroup rooms and for any other children in the service that required nappy changing. The toilet facilities located between the Montessori rooms provided three child sized toilet units and adequate child height hand wash facilities.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) 1. The ventilation grill on the wall of the upper right corner of the sleep room was observed to be covered in grey dust along the rows of the vent.
2. The inspector observed that there were tiles missing from the backsplash of the hand wash basins in the main sanitary facilities provided for the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d) 1. Ventilation grill was cleaned. Ventilation grill will be cleaned weekly by staff.
2. Hand wash dispenser was refitted. Management will ensure that maintenance is always kept up to date.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of clean ventilation grill.

Photographic evidence of repaired tiles on backsplash and repaired liquid soap dispenser.

Summary Comment

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