

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL041		
Name of Service:	EMSC Montessori Ltd		
Address of Service:	Long Lane, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal		
Eircode:	F92 N923		
Name of Registered Provider:	Maureen Walsh		
Service type:	Full Day, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	14/11/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	71	PM 49
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94		
Inspection undertaken by:	N McEndoo and L McGlynn		
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
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Description of service

EMSC Montessori Ltd. is a privately owned early years' service situated within the town of Letterkenny in County Donegal. The service provides full day care, part time and sessional preschool care to children aged 0 – 6 years. The service operates from 7.45am-5.30pm each weekday with a morning sessional service from 9.00am-12.00md. The service is also registered to provide school age care.

The premises consists of a detached two storey building that was purpose built for the provision of a preschool service. There are four care rooms on the ground floor and two on the first floor. There is one auxiliary room on the ground floor which is used by children attending the Montessori room 2 for specific focused activities. The room also provides a dining space for children in the afternoon. There is a kitchen on site where meals are prepared daily. The service has a designated outdoor play area which runs along the rear of the building is subdivided into three separate sections.

Staffing

There are 18 staff members employed in the service, 14 of which work directly with the preschool children. There is one office manager, one staff member who works exclusively with school age children, kitchen and cleaning staff. There was one student present on educational placement at the time of inspection. The registered provider is not on the premises on a daily basis, there is a named person in charge and a named deputy in their absence.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations 9, 10, 11, 19 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection. A review of the staff roster for the week evidenced that the designated person in charge or the named deputy was rostered to be on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.
 - (c) There was evidence of a clear management structure within the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability within the service.
- (2) On the day of inspection, it was confirmed with the registered provider that the vetting files for eight adults including the adult on student placement had not been previously reviewed. The following vetting information was available for these eight adults:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers for the eight adults.
 - (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for the eight adults.
 - (d) International police vetting documentation was available for two adults whose employment record indicated that they had lived outside of the jurisdiction for longer than 6 months while over the age of 18 years. Police vetting requirements outstanding from the previous inspection were also reviewed and found to meet the regulatory requirement.

- (4) Evidence of the completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework was available for five adults and not required for two adults.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) The documentation available for one adult was insufficient to determine if they have completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above in order to meet the minimum regulatory requirement. The document available consisted of a component certificate and not a final award certificate as required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The final award certificate has been requested from QQI for the staff member in question. This staff member will only care for the children in school age rooms until the final award certificate is obtained.

The service shall ensure when recruiting new staff that their final award certificate is available, verified and on file before commencing employment. Also, staff files will be reviewed periodically to reflect any changes or updates that are required.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentation submitted

Summary Comment

The information submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed and the non-compliance found on inspection in relation to regulation 9 (4) have been addressed. This regulation is now compliant.

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, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place for the service. The following policy was reviewed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

- Behaviour Management.

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)
There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. When the inspectors arrived unannounced, there were 13 staff members working directly with 71 children in six care rooms.

(2)

The adult to child ratio was maintained at all times during the inspection. The following illustrates the adult to child ratio on the morning of inspection.

- In the wobbler room, two adults cared for six children aged one year.
- In toddler one room, one adult cared for five children aged two years.
- In toddler two room, three adults cared for 12 children aged two years.
- In Montessori one, three adults cared for 18 children aged two to three years.
- In Montessori two, three adults cared for 21 children aged three to four years.
- In the preschool room, one adult cared for nine children aged four years.

(8)

(a) There were at least two adults rostered to be on the premises at all times during the hours of 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

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The service operated a four-week menu plan whereby nutritious meals and snacks were provided at regular intervals throughout the day. On the day of inspection children were served a cereal breakfast and morning snack of toast and fruit. The main meal of the day was mince stew with potatoes and vegetables which was served to each room at various intervals beginning at 12.40pm up to 2.00pm and an afternoon snack was scheduled for 3.30pm. Milk and water was served with meals and children were provided with adequate quantities food with more available if requested. Bibs were available to the children from the waddler room during mealtimes with spare clothes available to the children if required.
- Children attending Montessori room two were brought in smaller groups to the dining room to have their main meal which was served in a buffet style with children free to self-serve individual portions. Children were observed to be familiar with general rules of behaviour and waited their turn to serve their food.

The meal was observed to be a social occasion with staff heard encouraging children to share stories and experiences from their home and family life with the group. A similar atmosphere was observed during the mealtime in Montessori room one where children remained in the room in a large group to have their meal. Staff members sat with small groups of children while they ate and encouraged social conversation among the group. Children in this room were supported to be independent and were observed returning their plates to the sink for washing after the meal, cleaning their own face and placing their bibs in the basket for washing. All children were competent in the tasks and staff members encouraged, praised and supported children appropriately.

Older children in the Montessori and preschool rooms accessed the toilet facilities independently and were confident and capable in doing so. Nappy changing was carried out regularly when required and was handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Children's personal care needs were tended to in an efficient manner and staff were observed to be vigilant to individual needs. For example, children were prompted and supported by staff to clean their noses and faces as required. Bibs and aprons were available in the rooms for painting, water play and eating.

The layout of the Montessori and preschool rooms provided for the free movement of children and children were observed moving between the interest areas selecting play materials. The Waddler & Toddler rooms offered a range of play-based materials positioned at an accessible level throughout both rooms. Opportunity for sensorial experience through natural materials were observed, such as pasta, rice, coloured water, foil etc. stored in small shaker bottles for young children to inspect safely.

Staff were observed throughout the service interacting with children in a warm, caring, and sensitive manner. The adult working with the children of the toddler room was sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours, during a shared activity of using peg boards, supporting the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing the materials available. Babies who needed soothing at nap time were observed to be comforted and cuddled. Staff working with older children supported children to interact positively with one another and modelled pro social behaviours. Staff were heard praising children for being helpful to others, taking turns and sharing.

Smaller groups of children were assigned to specific staff members within the service who took responsibility for recording each child's learning progress. In Montessori two, staff member spoke of their desire to work together with parents to foster a children's interests and they were encouraging parents to become involved in the learning themes and topics being explored in the service.

Wall displays on the stairway provided parents with information from both Montessori two and the preschool room of the various topics and activities children had explored in the weeks prior. On the day of inspection, a child was observed pointing out their work to their parent at collection time, taking great pride in their efforts.

Ongoing observations of children were documented in the Montessori and preschool rooms, and it was evident that staff were working to ensure they were catering for each individual child in a complete, well-rounded manner. Curriculum plans were observed to be responsive to the emerging interests of children and adapted in line with evaluations and practice observed.

The learning environments within each of the rooms were well defined and adequately resourced to create inviting play spaces for children. The baby room offered space for children to be able to move around the room, creeping, crawling, and able to pull themselves up when they wanted with staff on hand to support when required. The layouts encouraged children to play together in small social groups and space was available for large group time at scheduled periods throughout the day. Pictorial wall displays of the routine and themes of interest areas provided a visual support to children in navigating both their environment and the structure of the day.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was adequately insured with a certificate available detailing cover for a maximum of 93 children attending full day care. The expiration date on the certificate was 31st August 2024.