

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL041
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Name of Service:	EMSC Montessori Ltd
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Address of Service:	Long Lane, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 N923
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Name of Registered Provider:	Maureen Walsh
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM	51
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child & Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X38W.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan and F. Maher
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 of a full day care and sessional care for children aged 0 – 6 years. A registered school age service is also provided. The hours of operation run weekdays from 7:30 am – 17:30 hours.

The service operates from a purpose built, two story detached building. There are five playrooms at ground floor level and two on the first floor. Sleep rooms are provided off the Baby and Toddler playrooms. Meals for children are prepared onsite. The spacious outdoor area to the rear of the building has been subdivided into different sections for children's outdoor play.

Staffing

The service employs twenty adults including the registered provider who was present on the day of the inspection. All adults employed and working directly with the pre-school children in the service had completed a major award in Early Childhood Care Education.

Of the twenty-one staff including nineteen core staff present on the day of the inspection, fourteen staff were all working directly with the preschool children. The other adults included the registered provider, the manager, assistant manager, who all provided cover to the care rooms for breaks, two students on placement, the cook for the service and an adult who provided kitchen support in the morning and school age care in the afternoon.

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 and safety.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Wobbler room, Toddler 1 room, Toddler 2 room and Montessori 2 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.

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.

(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 service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise.
 - (b) Both the person in charge and a named person who could deputise were on the premises during the inspection.
 - (c) The service had a clear, documented management structure which was displayed in the entrance hall of the service.

Twenty-five staff records were reviewed.

- (2)
- (a) Two written and verified past employer references were available in respect of fifteen adults and one written and verified past employer reference was available in respect of eight adults employed in the service whose records were reviewed.
- (b) Two written and verified references from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of two adults and one written and verified reference from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of eight adults whose records was reviewed.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all employed staff members and two students. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was in place for eleven adults employed who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4) Nineteen adults working directly with the children held qualifications in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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 were sixty-two children attending the service being supervised directly by fourteen staff members and two students during the inspection.

(2)(b) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day. This was confirmed by the staff roster for the service.

(8)(a) The staff roster indicated that they were at least two adults on the premises at all times

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:

Measures had been taken to safeguard the children. A system of daily indoor and outdoor environmental risk assessments had been implemented and were observed to be completed. The entrance door to the service was electronically controlled by staff members to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the care rooms. The person in charge documented the inspectors' visit to the service in the visitor's book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Measures were taken to reduce the risk of infection spreading. There was an infection control policy in place. Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. The toileting and nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were available throughout the service for the hygienic disposal and containment of used tissues/ paper towels. Soothers were stored in individual containers for each child using a soother in the service. Individual bed linen was provided and laundered frequently.

There was a system in place for the management of shared toys to prevent potential cross infection.

Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be clean and tidy.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required safe practices when administering medication in the service. Medicine was labelled and safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

Measures were taken to safeguard children when sleeping. All children were aged over one year on the day of inspection. The children slept in cots and low beds appropriate to their age and stage of development; an adult was

always present in the room where children slept on low beds. Children's outer clothing was removed prior to them being placed to sleep. All sleeping children were checked at ten-minute intervals and staff kept a record of the checks.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out. Emergency exits were kept clear to allow for timely evacuation in the event of a fire. There was a signed assembly point in the outdoor area and staff members demonstrated an awareness of fire evacuation procedures.

Outing:

The service conducts outings and an outings policy is in place.

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) Persons were trained in in First Aid Response (FAR) for children and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in conspicuous positions in the service. There was a sign in each care room which stated the location of the first aid equipment in the building.
 - (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children was available to the children attending the service.

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.*
- (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 written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was recorded on 25 October 2024.
 - (b) Records were kept of the maintenance of the firefighting and the smoke alarm system in the premises which was last serviced in June 2024 and 11 November 2024 respectively.
- (4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 31 August 2025. The insurance provided cover for 101 children attending on a full day care basis.