

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR023
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Name of Service:	Bright Minds Childcare and Montessori School Ltd
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Address of Service:	128 Balally Drive, Dundrum, Dublin 16, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D16 P025
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Name of Registered Provider:	Stephanie Gratton
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	08/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Duff S. Quigley
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).

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Description of service

Bright Minds Childcare & Montessori School is a privately owned service, operated by the current registered provider since 2020. The service is located in a residential area of Dundrum, South Co. Dublin. The service is registered to provide full day, part-time and sessional care and education to children aged 0 to 6 years. The hours of operation are from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 18:00. The premises is a two storey purposely adapted residential property. Care and education are provided across four care rooms, three of which are located in the main building and one in a separate building to the rear of the premises which children are allocated to by age range and stage of development. An enclosed outdoor play area is available to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 14 staff members, including the registered provider and a cook. On the day of inspection 10 adults were present. The registered provider was not present on the day of inspection.

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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child, information and records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 and 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby room, Toddler room and Montessori room.

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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.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN 0121	09/04/2026	Police vetting was not available for one adult who was working with the children on the day of inspection.
Status	The registered provider took immediate corrective action which addressed the risk identified. Preventative actions were submitted by the registered provider which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	
Improvement Notice IN 0142	08/04/2026	The lock on the main entrance and exit door to and from the service was broken. This presented a risk of an unauthorized person gaining access to the premises or children exiting the service unsupervised.

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Status	The registered provider took immediate corrective action which addressed the risk identified. Preventative actions were submitted by the registered provider which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	
Improvement Notice IN 0141	08/04/2026	On the day of inspection, the children in the Montessori room were observed playing in school yard adjacent to the service. The school yard was not secured and had openings in three separate sections. The area lead directly onto a foot path used by members of the public and two main roads. In addition, a risk assessment had not been completed in advance of taking the children on this outing.
Status	The registered provider took immediate corrective action which addressed the risk identified. Preventative actions were submitted by the registered provider which were accepted and addressed the statutory notice.	

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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.

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(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

(2)

The inspection included a review of the required documentation for four staff members employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 05 June 2025. Garda vetting disclosures were assessed for each of the 14 staff members employed. The following documentation was available;

(a)(b) Of the eight written and validated references that were required, eight were available from a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for 14 staff members. Garda vetting disclosures from all staff members were assessed to determine compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Garda vetting which was dated within the last three years was available for 13 staff, however, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for three out of the four adults employed in the service since the last inspection who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.

(4) Records were available evidencing that three staff members employed in the service since the last inspection dated 05 June 2025 who were employed to work directly with the children held at least the required award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) See Statutory Notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN01221 served.

(3) Documentation reviewed evidence that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had not been carried out prior to three adults commencing employment in the service since the last inspection on 05 June 2026.

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- Two written and verified references for one adult were not in place prior to them commencing employment in the service.
- Police vetting for two adults had not been sought prior to them commencing employment in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated:

(2)(d) Police vetting has been received for the staff member who required it. A vetting checklist has been implemented for all new staff, clearly outlining requirements for international vetting where applicable. No staff member will be permitted to commence employment without complete and verified vetting documentation.

(3) The date for validation of references had been incorrectly recorded by the service; the service will ensure all references are checked and verified prior to new staff commencing employment. This will include ensuring the correct dates are noted in the verification checks.

No staff member will be permitted to commence employment without complete and verified vetting documentation.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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.

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Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day and part time services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 20 children attending the service being supervised by 6 staff members on the morning of the inspection and 22 children attending the service being supervised by 6 staff members in the afternoon.

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

A calm and welcoming atmosphere was evident on arrival in the service. Staff and children were engaged in a range of activities. The children moved freely in all rooms – exploring their environment, playing and engaging with each other and the staff. Staff demonstrated warmth and affection in their interactions with the children. Identity and belonging were promoted in all care rooms with children's family photos, and artwork displayed on the walls of the care rooms and visible to children. Child sized tables and chairs allowed the children to eat and engage in tabletop activities. There was evidence that equipment and materials provided were based on the children's individual needs and emergent interests. The rooms had a mix of Montessori materials, toys and equipment which were laid out on low level shelving units and accessible to children.

Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to a new activity and for mealtimes, all food was supplied by the service and staff stated a healthy eating policy is shared with families on enrolment. Drinks were readily available within the care room. During mealtimes children and adults were observed sitting together, with staff providing children with help when needed. Children were encouraged to clean up after themselves and assisted to clean their faces and hands at appropriate times. Nappy changes for younger children were carried out on a schedule, and staff were observed to promptly respond to children requiring a nappy change outside of the

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scheduled times. During this time, staff talked to children, supporting them to feel safe and secure. Older children were observed to use the toilet independently, and staff were available to provide support if required. Children in the baby room had two sleeps according to their individual needs and children in the toddler room were placed to sleep as part of the room routine. The sleep rooms were calm and conducive to sleep. Children were observed to enjoy songs and story time and children appeared familiar with the routine of the day. Staff detailed the procedures used to communicate effectively with families to share children's activities and daily routine.

The outdoor area was equipped with a range of toys and materials to support play experiences and children were observed use the outdoors throughout the day.

Non-Compliance Information

The Toddler room did not have a rest area where children could rest or take a break from activities.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated that a rest area has been added to the toddler room to allow children rest or take a break from activities. The rest area will remain in the toddler room going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation in the form of a photograph has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next 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:

- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- Medication was stored in a locked cupboard or on a high shelf out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

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- The children were supported by staff members to wash their hands at appropriate intervals throughout the inspection.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of procedures to safeguard children when administering medicine. This included getting written consent from parents or guardians, having a second staff member present as a witness during administration, and maintaining detailed records shared with parents or guardians upon collection.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff members were familiar with safe sleep guidelines. Sleep logs were recorded in the dedicated sleep rooms and care rooms where children slept. Children's individual observations included room temperature, breathing, colour, and position which were recorded every 10 minutes. Children slept in standard cots and low-level beds in accordance with children's ages and developmental needs. The temperature of the rooms where children slept were maintained at the required temperature ranges.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire and evacuation procedures were on display in the care rooms and corridors.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN0142 served.
- The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for one staff member working in the service

Infection Control:

- In the baby room, the straps on the highchairs used by the babies during mealtimes were observed to be stained, with food residue in the clips and buckles. This poses a risk of cross contamination to children.

Outing:

- See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN0141 served.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

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Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has stated:

1. The lock on the main door has been repaired by a locksmith. The service will ensure maintenance checks are carried out on the door regularly.
2. Garda vetting has been received for the staff member who required updated vetting. Going forward re-vetting applications will be submitted 3 months in advance of the expiry date.

Infection Control:

3. The straps on the highchairs used by the babies have been washed. Straps will be washed biweekly.

Outing:

4. The preschool children will no longer use the school grounds. All preschool activities and outdoor play will be restricted to the designated creche garden area to ensure appropriate supervision, safety and compliance with regulations.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Infection Control:

Supporting documentation in the form of a photograph has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Outing:

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

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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)(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and safely stored in easily accessible and conspicuous positions throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The service could not provide evidence that an adult trained in First Aid Response was available at all times to the children attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that three staff members are currently training in First Aid Response. An additional staff member has booked into an upcoming course to ensure adequately trained staff are always available to the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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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-
- (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) Documentation was available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. The last fire drill was carried out on 03 March 2026.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last serviced on 23 January 2026 and smoke detectors were serviced on 12 March 2026.
- (2)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.
- 4) Procedures detailing the steps to take in the event of a fire were displayed on the wall in the care rooms and the hallway of the service.

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) Throughout the premises, areas of the building were found not to be cleaned, maintained and repaired as required as detailed below:

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1. A deep gap was observed between the outside building and the ground surface. This created a large foothold that was accessible to children.
2. Throughout the garden, uneven paving slabs were observed to be loose and lifting. This created a trip hazard for children and staff.
3. The ramp leading from the conservatory area into the sessional Montessori room was loose and broken in parts. This posed potential tripping hazard.
4. The door leading from the toddler room to the outdoor area was off the runner making it difficult to open and close. This posed a potential risk to children as it was the only means of entry from the garden into the room.
5. In the Montessori room the paint on the edges of the shelving units were worn away exposing porous wood, this prevented effective cleaning and posed a risk of cross contamination to children.
6. In the Montessori room, the laminate surface on the three tables used by the children at mealtimes and during tabletop activities was observed to be worn exposing porous wood. In addition, a section of one of the tables had sticky tape holding down a paper shape. The tape was coming away leaving a sticky residue with debris accumulated on it.

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider following the last two inspections of the service on 02 September 24 and 05 June 2025 did not prevent the re-occurrence of the non-compliance under Regulation 29 on points 1,2 and 3 above.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated:

1. The gap between the outside building and the ground surface has been temporally filled with sand. The outdoor area will be landscaped in July. This gap will be filled with a pipe, and a grate will be laid on top.
2. The garden will be resurfaced in July; this will include laying grass on the ground instead of paving slabs.
3. The ramp has been covered by an anti-slip tape surface; this will be maintained to ensure it is not a tripping hazard.
4. The track for the sliding door was cleaned to ensure the door opens and closes easily; a company has been appointed to replace the door.
5. The shelves in the Montessori room have been sanded and repainted. The service will carry out regular checked to ensure the shelves are maintained.

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6. New tables have been ordered for the Montessori room, these tables will be monitored and maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation in the form of a photographs have been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.