

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR096
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Name of Service:	Springfield Montessori
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Address of Service:	Springfield Lane, Carrickmines, Dublin 18, Co. Dublin.
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Name of Registered Provider:	Clodagh O'Leary
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Brunel Building Heuston South Quarter Saint John's Road West Dublin 8. D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Duff
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

Description of service

Springfield Montessori is a privately owned service which operates from a room on the premises of an equestrian centre in south county Dublin. The service is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 20 children aged 2-6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and runs a morning session daily from 9:15am-12:15pm. The service operates 38 weeks per year in line with the programme rules.

The children have access to an enclosed garden area and another sheltered outdoor space which is located outside the preschool room.

Staffing

There are two adults employed in the service including the registered provider. Another adult is available for relief duties as required.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2) and (4)-Management and recruitment.
Regulation 10 Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service
Regulation 11(1)(3) Staffing levels.
Regulation 19 -Health, welfare and development of child.
Regulation 23 Safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of child.
Regulation 26 Fire safety measures
Regulation 28-Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 and 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection focused on the preschool 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 under Regulation 23 to the registered provider on the day of inspection in relation to a safety concern identified. It is acknowledged that the registered provider immediately implemented actions to mitigate the risk identified. A response was received on 25 February 2025 from the registered provider which will further mitigate the risk from future occurrence. Please see details in the body of the report.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspector arrived to the service.
- (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own role and responsibilities.
- (2) The files of the registered provider and two staff who work in the service were reviewed.

- (a) Four written and verified references were available from past employers.
- (b) One written and verified references was available from a reputable source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and two staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International Police vetting was not required as there was evidence to show that no staff member had resided outside of the jurisdiction for six months or more as an adult.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that three adults who worked directly with the children in the service and the registered provider held 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.

Non-Compliance Information

2 (b) One written reference was available for one staff member however there was no evidence to show that this had been verified. Written references should be verified to ensure the potential employee is suitable and competent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider verified the outstanding reference, and will ensure all references are verified in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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 inspector reviewed the service's policies and the statement of purpose and function. The service also provides parents with key policies and information on induction. A safety statement and risk assessment is also available to all parents and staff and was forwarded on to the inspectorate for review.

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) The registered provider ensured there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
(3) During the Inspection, there were 2 adults caring for 12 children aged 3-5 years old.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The inspector observed appropriate care practices in place in the service during the inspection.

A calm and welcoming atmosphere was evident on arrival at the service. Two staff members and twelve children were engaged in a range of table-top activities. Staff members were attentive and responsive to the needs of the children throughout the day and were observed to respond to children in a calm and relaxed manner throughout the inspection. Circle time was interactive with all children having an opportunity to share their news.

Identity and belonging were promoted in the classroom with children's family photos, birthday balloons and artwork displayed on the walls of the care room and visible to children. Engagement with families and parents is facilitated by the daily sharing of information on the child's day. This is shared through conversations at drop off and collection. On the day of inspection transitions from preschool to home were observed to be friendly and informative to parents or guardians collecting children.

Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to new activity and for lunch time. Children brought in their lunch from home. Children had the opportunity to hand out lunch and drinks to their peers. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment.

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. Suitable toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving and accessible to children.

The two outdoor areas were well equipped with a range of toys and materials to support play experiences.

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:

- When the inspector arrived at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorized persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. In addition, both outdoor play areas were securely gated restricting unauthorized persons from gaining access to this area and to prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- Grapes and tomatoes in children's lunch boxes were observed to be cut into appropriate bite sized pieces.
- Toys and equipment were maintained in good condition free from hazards.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- The outdoor areas were observed to be suitable, safe and secure with domestic bins stored out of children's reach and all outdoor play materials maintained and in good condition free from hazards.
- Anti-febrile medication and cleaning agents to include disinfectant sprays and liquids were stored on high shelves and in high cupboards.

Fire Safety:

- On the day of inspection, it was observed that all emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The radiator in the children's sanitary accommodation was not thermostatically controlled to ensure that the surface is no hotter than the recommended 50°C. The radiator temperature accessible to the children was recorded at 60.6°C which posed a risk of scalding for the children. An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection in relation to the safety concern identified. It is acknowledged that the registered provider immediately implemented actions to mitigate the risk identified. A response was received on 25 February 2025 from the registered provider which will further mitigate the risk from future occurrence.

Infection Control:

- Warm water was not available in the children's sanitary accommodation to facilitate effective hand washing. The temperature of the water was 11°C .

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The thermostat on the radiator has been reset and a daily reading of the temperature is recorded by the staff in the service.

Infection Control:

The thermostat on the water heater has been temporarily fixed, a new thermostat will be installed during the Easter break when the service is closed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider and reviewed by the early year's inspector.

Infection Control:

No supporting documentation was submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances. This regulation will be assessed on the 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.*

(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

- 1 (b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguisher was last serviced in June 2024. Mains powered self-contained smoke alarm was last serviced on 30 May 2024.
- (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 door in the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) Documentation was not available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. It is acknowledged that the registered provider carried out a fire drill on 25 February 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service will ensure monthly fire drills take place and are recorded and stored appropriately to ensure they are available for inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted.

Summary Comment

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the sessional service was insured. The insurance certificate provided for review showed cover for the 20 children the service is registered for and an expiry date of 27 March 2025.