

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015DS023

Name of Service: The Lodge Montessori School

Address of Service: 1 Templeroan Lodge, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16

Eircode: D16 FK76

Name of Registered Provider: Fionnula Kennedy

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 31/01/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	7

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate
2nd Floor, Unit 4/5
The Nexus Building
Blanchardstown Corporate Park
Ballycoolin
Dublin 15 | D15 CF9K

Inspection undertaken by: L Jameson

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

The Lodge Montessori School is a sessional service providing care for children aged 2 – 6 years. The service operates from a purpose-built facility adjacent to the registered provider's home in Dublin 16 and includes a care room, sanitary facilities and access to an enclosed garden to the rear of the building. The service provides a morning session from 9:00am – 12:00pm and an afternoon session from 1:00pm – 4:00pm, catering for up to 16 children. The service offers the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE).

Staffing

The service employs four staff, including the registered provider, who work directly with the children attending the service.

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

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(3) and (4) Management and Recruitment.

Regulation 11(1)(3) Staffing Levels.

Regulation 19 (1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of Child.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety, and Welfare of Child.

Regulation 25 First Aid.

Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures.

Regulation 28 Insurance.

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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.

(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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service.
 - (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own role and responsibilities.
- (2) Conversation with management and staff confirmed there are four adults currently employed in the service including the registered provider. The files of all four staff were reviewed.
- (a) Three written and verified references were available from past employers.

- (b) Four written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 4 adults employed in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.
- (3) Evidence was available to demonstrate that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out in relation to four adults before employment commenced.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that the four adults who worked directly with the children 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) (a)(b) A second validated, written reference was not available for one staff member.
- (d) International police vetting was not available for one staff member in respect of two countries they had resided in outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a) (b) A second validated written reference for one staff member has now been added to the staff file. An inspection guidance document has been printed and will be reviewed by all staff to ensure all practices are in line with the inspectorate's requirements.
- (d) International police vetting application has been submitted for one staff member who lived in a country other than Ireland for a period longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult. The staff member has confirmed that international police vetting for a second country is not required as they did not live in the state for a period longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult. The registered provider will seek assistance/advice with regulatory compliance, where needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation in relation to the above has been reviewed.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions taken by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under regulation 9(2)(a)(b). However, regulation 9(2)(d) will remain outstanding. The registered provider is required to submit the police vetting document to the inspectorate when it is received.

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 that adequate staff were working directly with the children in the service and that ratios were maintained at all times.
- (3) On the morning of the inspection, two staff were caring for 15 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-

(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

(1)(b) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children attending:

- Staff members were observed to actively supervise and guide the children throughout the day. The children appeared to be happy and confident in their environment.
- Staff members were observed to use calm tones and respectful language on the day of the inspection, positively reinforcing the children's achievements with praise and recognition.
- During circle time, the children and staff members were observed to engage in meaningful discussion with each other about kings, queens and castles. This activity was followed by a treasure hunt during which the children displayed patience, independence and turn-taking skills.
- Children's photographs and artwork were displayed throughout the care room. Each child had their own coat hook labelled with a photograph which supported a sense of identity and belonging.
- The children were observed to play outdoors during the inspection, supporting social and gross motor skills while promoting spontaneous and imaginative play.
- The children were encouraged to follow their own interests and offered alternative activities, for example, one child didn't want to play with their group in the outdoor area, instead choosing a tabletop activity and rejoining the group a short time later. This practice encourages decision making and empowers the children with their choices.
- Staff members shared updates and photographs with parents through an electronic application, this promotes an open line of communication between the service and home while supporting relationships with staff members and parents.

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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The entrance door was appropriately monitored by staff who asked the inspector to sign in on the visitor book.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of the children.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- Blind cords were secured safely out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to wash their hands at regular intervals on the day of inspection, for example, on arrival to the service, after toileting and outdoor play.
- Foot pedal operated bins were available in the care rooms and sanitary areas to allow hygienic disposal of contaminated materials.
- Staff members were observed to clean down surfaces after mealtimes and activities, reducing the risk of cross contamination.

Administration of Medication:

- Individual medical care plans for two children who required emergency medication were displayed in a conspicuous place in the service which supported staff in the event that one of these children required the medication to be administered.
- Medication was clearly labelled in its original packaging and stored in an area that was not accessible to the children.

Fire Safety:

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

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Perishable snacks brought by the children from home for morning snack were not stored in a fridge for a period of time on the morning of the inspection. It was observed that these items were placed in the fridge at 09:50am. This increased the risk of bacteria multiplying to levels which could result in illness in young children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. During a staff meeting, it was decided that children would place their lunchboxes straight into the fridge on arrival to the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted. This will be reviewed on the next inspection.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions taken by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under regulation 23.

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) Two staff members who were observed to work directly with the children on the day of inspection held in-date certification for First Aid Response (FAR) training which ensured that a person with FAR training was immediately available to the children attending the service at all times.
- (2) (a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in 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 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) The service conducts monthly fire drills with the pre-school children on various days and at various times. The last fire drill dated was held on 9 December 2024.
 - (b) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate a maintenance check was carried out on the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in October 2024.
- (2)
 - (c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All fire 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.

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 that the service was adequately insured to reflect the type of care provided. The insurance certificate had an expiry date of 27 March 2025.