

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS103
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Name of Service:	Montessori Matters
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Address of Service:	108 Esker Manor, Lucan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K78 AE93
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Smyth
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	31
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Quigley
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Montessori Matters is an early years service which offers care and education on a full day care, part time, and sessional basis to pre-school children aged 2 to 6 years. The programme of care is facilitated through a blend of a play-based and Montessori curriculum. The service is registered to operate Monday to Friday from 09:00am to 17:00pm. The early years service is located in a residential area of Lucan, south Co Dublin. The service is facilitated in a purpose-built premises comprising of three care rooms, sanitary accommodation, a kitchen, and an office space. A large outdoor area is available on the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 13 staff members including a centre manager, an office administrator and an adult who works solely with school aged children. The registered provider does not work directly in the service day to day. On the morning of inspection 11 adults were present. The registered provider arrived to the service to greet the inspector but did not stay for the duration of the 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 area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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, 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

(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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

Documentation was reviewed in full in respect of Regulation 9(2)(3)(4) for seven adults who the centre manager identified as having commenced employment in the service since the last date of inspection on the 1 May 2024. Regulation 9(2)(c) was reviewed for all adults employed. The following documents were available;

- (2)
 - (a) (b)

References were available from two sources for the seven adults which had been appropriately verified.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures from The National Vetting Bureau were available for all adults employed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting was available for one of the newly employed adults who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six months as an adult.
- (3) Documentation reviewed evidenced the procedures specified under Regulation 9(2) had been completed prior to the adult's commencing employment in the service.
- (4) There was evidence to show that six of the adults had attained at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications. One of the adults did not require a minimum level of qualification.

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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service during the inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 51 pre-school children attending the service being supervised by 9 adults during the inspection.

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

Staff stated a healthy eating policy was available in the service and that regular meals and snacks are provided daily. Lunch was provided by the parents of the children in attendance. A hot meal from an external catering company is provided by the service for children attending on a part time or full day care basis, along with an afternoon snack. The food observed was varied and nutritious. Mealtime was a relaxed and sociable occasion, and adults were observed sitting with the children and engaging in conversation. Children were encouraged to be independent in getting their bags, drinks and lunchboxes for mealtime. Children's drinks were available to them during the inspection.

Children were encouraged and supported to be independent suitable to their age and stage of development including using the toilet independently, completing tasks in the care room, and cleaning up following mealtimes and play. The routine and play experiences in the service were observed to be mostly child-led, and children were visibly content and engaged in their play throughout the inspection. The adults were observed to have a supportive role in the children's learning and play, involving themselves when invited or using prompts to extend conversations, learning, and play.

Suitable rest areas were available to the children where they could avail of rest periods or quiet time away from the group as required. The adults were observed to offer praise and encouragement towards the children, prompting individual choices during morning activities. Adults used soft tones and respectful language during interactions

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

which reflected in the calm, relaxed atmosphere of the service. Children were alerted in advance of transitions using sand timers which ensued smoothly to new activities such as tidy up time, outdoor play, and lunch time.

The play and Montessori materials were observed to be easily accessible to the children on low level shelving, facilitating children's choice of play. Good personal hygiene practices were implemented, and children showed an awareness of when to hand wash and did so after outdoor play, before lunch and after using the toilet. Children's artwork was displayed on the walls alongside photographs of the children and their families in various displays including picture timetables, all about me, birthday, and family walls. Children had coat hooks with their photographs on them to store their belongings and individual boxes in the classrooms to put artwork.

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

The inspector found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff, and inspection of the premises that the following steps were taken to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

The entrance door into the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons gaining access or children exiting unsupervised. The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored securely out of reach of the children. There were no hazards identified in the classrooms or outdoor play area.

Infection Control:

An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. Pedal-operated, lidded bins were in place to appropriately manage waste. Staff supported children to wash their hands at regular intervals including after using the toilet, and before lunch. Schedules were in place and maintained to ensure the service, equipment and materials are regularly cleaned. Staff members outlined appropriate exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses were implemented in the service as per the policy.

Administration of Medication:

Staff members stated medication is not routinely administered in the service. There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of temperature reducing medication if required, and there were

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

procedures in place to safely administer such medication. Staff members detailed the procedures for administering medications during discussions with the inspector and had documentation in place to safely record administration of medications if required. Children requiring emergency medication had detailed care plans in place and staff members detail the requirements of these during discussions with the inspector.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.

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

(2)

(a) The first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available in the service at all times on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

An adult trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) training was not available to the children on the day of inspection. It is acknowledged that an adult had expired FAR training and was enrolled to update their certification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A second staff member is now FAR qualified. The service stated they were unaware that if a staff member who is FAR qualified is sick for a day that another staff member is required to have FAR. This has been rectified now, and two staff members have FAR. In addition, the service plan for a third staff member to complete FAR to ensure they are compliant if other staff with FAR are absent.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the inspector.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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.*
- (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 detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill had taken place in February 2026.
 - (b) There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system had been serviced within the required timeframes.
- (4)
- The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.