

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS192
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Name of Service:	Montessori Matters Ltd
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Address of Service:	23 Griffeen Glen Vale, Lucan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K78 V596
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Smyth
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	19
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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:	Sarah 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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Montessori Matters is a privately owned early years service. Care and education are provided to preschool children aged two to six years on a sessional basis through a blend of a Montessori and play based curriculum. The service is located in a residential area of Lucan, South Co Dublin. The service operates from a two storey purposely adapted residential property. Two interconnecting care rooms are available to the children and an outdoor play area.

Staffing

The service currently employs three staff members, not including the registered provider who does not work directly in the service. On the day of inspection, the three staff members were present. The area manager and the registered provider arrived subsequent to the inspector's arrival to support staff members and facilitate 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/ information and records. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The inspection focused on the following regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15.

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

(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 required.
 - (b) The person in charge was present when the inspector arrived to the service and remained present for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place and conversations with staff demonstrated an awareness of their individual roles and responsibilities within the service.

Documentation in respect of Regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was assessed for all three adults who had been employed since the last date of inspection on the 9th February 2022. The following documentation met compliance as follows:

- (2)
- (a) (b)
- The registered provider demonstrated that they had verified the references obtained from two sources for the three adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from The National Vetting Bureau were available for each of the three adults employed. The service also demonstrated they adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was available for one adult who required it.
- (3) Documentation reviewed for the three adults evidenced that the procedures specified under regulation 9(2) had been completed prior to them commencing employment.
- (4) Each of the three adults held a relevant major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service during the inspection.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained in the service on the day of inspection. There were nineteen children present in the service being supervised by three adults during the inspection.
- (8) (c) Not applicable, the service is not operated single-handedly.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)-(i)

A sample of documentation was reviewed for twelve of the children currently enrolled to attend the service by the inspector. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to points (a) to (i) of the above regulation for each of the records reviewed.

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

The inspector observed appropriate care practices in place throughout the inspection.

Children and staff members sat together during lunch time creating a sociable atmosphere. Drinks of water were available to the children at all times. A designated rest area was provided within the rooms where children could relax or take a break from activities. Staff provided comfort to children when upset and managed minor conflicts using positive strategies. Children were encouraged to be independent in cleaning up after play and preparing for mealtimes. Staff prepared children for transitions using timers which ensured a seamless transition from one stage of the morning to the next. Staff demonstrated a robust awareness of children's individual care needs and demonstrated this throughout the inspection during conversations and one to one interactions with the children. The children moved freely between the two care rooms, independently choosing what play and Montessori based activities they would like to engage in both alone, in groups, and with staff members.

The programme of care was observed to be child led and children were visibly content and engaged in play throughout the inspection. Staff arranged areas of interest, various activities, and areas of the Montessori curriculum for the children to ensure meaningful play experiences. These included arts and crafts activities, dress up, small world play, and imaginative play. Children accessed the toilet independently and staff provided support to younger children where required. Staff availed of opportunities throughout the inspection for personal one to one conversation and were continuously chatting to the children creating a language rich environment. Staff interacted warmly and respectfully with the children and regularly offered praise and encouragement.

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 the registered provider, and inspection of the premises that the following steps 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. The registered provider had taken measures to ensure the indoor play environment was safe and free from hazards. Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored securely out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Pedal-operated, lidded bins were in place throughout the service to appropriately manage waste. 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. Warm water, soap, and paper towels were available for handwashing and both staff and children were observed to handwash at appropriate times throughout the morning.

Administration of Medication:

There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of both temperature reducing and prescribed medications, and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required, including in the case of an emergency. Staff members detailed the procedures for administering medication when required during discussions with the inspector and had appropriate documentation available to record such administration if required.

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 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - (iii) an employee, or*
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Documentation reviewed evidenced that a record was maintained in the service which detailed the children's arrival and departure times each day.
- (3)
- (a) A system was in place to ensure that visitors to the service could not gain entry without the approval of an employee. The entrance door to the service was secure, and a bell was in place for visitors to request entry.
 - (b) A record was available in the service which documented the entry of visitors. The person in charge requested the inspector sign this record on arrival which detailed the time of arrival and departure, the reason for entry, the staff member approving entry, and the contact details of the visitor.
- (4) Documentation reviewed evidenced the record detailed above in paragraph (3) was retained for the specified timeframe.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the service was adequately insured for the type of service provided and the number of children in attendance.