

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY118
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Name of Service:	Little Footprints Montessori
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Address of Service:	130th Priorswood Scout Den, Clonshaugh Shopping Centre, Clonshaugh, Dublin 17.
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Eircode:	D17 KW62
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ashling Fitzmaurice
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	Non-applicable
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8 D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Griffin
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).

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Description of service

Little Footprints Montessori is located in a scout's den hall in North Dublin. The service is registered to provide care for children aged between 2 to 6 years old, on a sessional and part time basis and operates from 9:00am to 1:00pm Monday to Friday. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and operates a morning session between 9:00am to 12:00pm Monday to Friday. The service is also registered to operate a school aged service.

The care room which is in the main hall is divided into two sections to provide different learning and play opportunities for the children. There is an onsite kitchen and an outdoor play area to the front of the service. There is sanitary accommodation for children and staff.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs two adults including one adult who is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). In addition, there is one adult who works for an outside agency and provides support to one of the children in the care room. On the day of the inspection the registered provider and two adults were present including the one support adult from an outside agency.

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

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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) and (4) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11 (1) and (2)
- Regulation 19(1)(a)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child
- Regulation 25 First Aid

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 (1)(a)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the one care room, children's sanitary accommodation and the outdoor play area.

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.

(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 registered provider is also the person-in-charge and has one named person who can deputise when required.
 - (b) The registered provider was present in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was further evidenced through discussion with staff.
- (2) The files of the registered provider and three adults who work directly with the children were reviewed.
- (a) There were seven written and validated references available from past employers.
 - (b) There was one written and validated reference from a source other than a past employer.

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- (c) Garda vetting was available for four adults however, 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. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (4) There was evidence to show that the registered provider and three adults who work 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.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) There were twelve preschool children being cared for by the registered provider and one adult on the morning of inspection.
- (3) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection.

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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

(1) The registered provider ensured that the following care practices were in place to support the health, welfare and development of the children present.

(a)

- Children's labelled water bottles were available within their reach throughout the session, should they feel thirsty at any stage.
- A rest area was available to the children in the care room. This area included a soft rug, child sized sofa and armchairs and books providing the children with a comfortable place to rest or engage in quiet activities.
- Children's sense of identity was promoted throughout the care room. For example, there was a 'birthday date' display, an 'interest' wall display, the artwork of the children was displayed throughout the care room, and children had their own individually labelled coat hooks.
- Children were observed to take part in free play and group work. The layout of the room facilitated these choices as the toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving and were visible and accessible to the children. In addition, play materials and equipment were themed which provided for spontaneous play opportunities.
- There was a sufficient number of low tables and chairs to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care room.
- The children were observed to play outdoors. This supported their social, cognitive, and gross and fine motor development.
- Staff were observed to engage in conversations with parents at collection times. These updates keep parents informed about the daily morning activities of their child.

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(b)

- Staff working with the children were observed to give children verbal reminders in advance of moving from one activity to the next activity. This provided the children with a sense of stability, security, and predictability. Additionally, the children appeared to be familiar with moving from one activity to the next and transitions were observed to be smooth.

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:

- On the unannounced arrival at the service by the inspector, the entrance door leading into the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises throughout the inspection.
- The inspector was asked to sign in the visitor book on arrival.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to children attending throughout the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.
- Windows were all positioned at a high level and were inaccessible to the children attending.
- The outdoor area was appropriately securely fenced and gated and children who played outdoors were adequately supervised.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary accommodation was equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, and hand paper towels hygienically dispensed. Children were familiar with handwashing.
- There was a fridge present to store perishable goods brought by three children from home for snack time.
- An ambient temperature of 18-22°C was maintained in the care room, and the windows were open to allow fresh circulation of air.

Fire Safety:

- The emergency exit doors were observed to be clear from obstruction. This helps to ensure the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The inspector observed a hole in the wall which had been closed off using steel wool material and was accessible to children. This posed a potential risk of safety.
2. There was a trailing flex at the back of the cosy area which was accessible to the children. This posed a potential risk of safety.
3. The cement area directly in front of a shutter in the hall area was observed to be slightly slanted and damaged. This posed a potential trip hazard.
4. There was no documentary evidence to show that staff conduct daily risk assessments of the service. In addition, the service did not have a risk management policy available. This posed a potential risk of safety to the children. Daily risk assessments minimise risks to the children and risk management records play an important role in mitigating and where possible eliminating risks ensuring children are kept safe.
5. One garda vetting disclosure reviewed was not dated within three years. This was not in adherence with early years inspectorate regulatory notice requiring services to renew staff garda vetting every three years.

Infection Control:

The service did not ensure that effective infection control measures were in place in the children sanitary accommodation area to reduce the spread of infection. Evidenced by the following:

6. There was no foot pedal operated bin for the hygienic disposal of waste in the sanitary accommodation used by the children. This posed a risk of cross infection.
7. The nappy changing mat was observed to be stored against the wall just behind the bin in the sanitary accommodation. This posed a risk of cross infection.
8. There were clothes and nappies stored in loose bags on the floor behind the door of the sanitary accommodation. This posed a risk of cross infection.
9. The infection control policy did not include the following information:
 - How the service manages outbreaks of infectious diseases including reporting notifiable diseases to Tusla.
 - Description of safe management of perishable food items.
 - Procedures for exclusion of children from the service due to illness.

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Fire Safety:

10. The service did not maintain accurate children's attendance records required for safe evacuation in the event of an emergency. The details of one child who was present on the day of the inspection and who had begun on 20 April 2026 was not recorded in the children's attendance book.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The steel wool has been removed, and the hole has been appropriately secured. Management will implement the risk assessment policy and carry out risk assessments to identify any potential hazards.
2. The trailing flex has been removed, and the printer has been moved to a secure area. Management will ensure that anything that needs to be plugged in will be inaccessible to children going forward.
3. Management have rearranged the children's tables in front of the shutter area so that the children do not have access to this area. Management will implement the risk assessment policy and carry out risk assessments to identify any potential hazards.
4. Management have developed a risk management policy together with daily risk assessments. Management will evaluate all policies to ensure that they are in up to date and in line with Tusla regulations.
5. Management have received the staff members up to date garda vetting. Management will set up a reminder to ensure that vetting is carried out every three years.

Infection Control:

6. The bin has been replaced with a pedal bin. Management will use the bathroom risk assessment.
7. Management have replaced the mat with a fold out changing mat that is stored in a box with a lid on it. Management will implement the risk management policy to ensure compliance going forward.
8. The clothes and items have been removed and stored in a box with a lid on it. Management will implement the infection control policy to ensure compliance going forward.
9. Management have updated the Infection Control policy. Management will ensure that all policies are up to date and in line with Tusla regulations.

Fire Safety:

10. Management will ensure that only the person in charge on the day completes the attendance form. Management will make sure the attendance book is at the door so it can be filled in as children are coming in and leaving the service.

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Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the hole appropriately secured. Documentary evidence of the updated risk management policy and daily risk assessment document.
2. Photographic evidence of the trailing flex removed. Documentary evidence of the updated risk management policy and daily risk assessment document.
3. Photographic evidence of the shutter area inaccessible. Documentary evidence of the updated risk management policy and daily risk assessment document.
4. Documentary evidence of the updated risk management policy and daily risk assessment for indoors, outdoor play area and sanitary accommodation.
5. Documentary evidence of the staff members updated garda vetting disclosure.

Infection Control:

6. Photographic evidence of the new foot pedal operated bin. Documentary evidence of the updated infection control policy and bathroom risk assessment.
7. Photographic evidence of new fold out mat stored in box with a lid. Documentary evidence of the updated infection control policy and bathroom risk assessment.
8. Photographic evidence of clothes/items stored in box with a lid. Documentary evidence of the updated infection control policy and bathroom risk assessment.
9. Documentary evidence of the updated infection control policy and bathroom risk assessment.

Fire Safety:

10. No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provide through the corrective and preventive action plan have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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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) Evidence was available to show that the registered provider and one adult hold certification in First Aid Responder (FAR) training.
- (2) The registered provider ensured the following.
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, and unobstructed if needed to access quickly.
 - (b) The registered provider showed the inspector a suitably equipped first aid box which was available at all times for the adult caring for children attending the service if required.