

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY139
Name of Service:	Meadows Montessori
Address of Service:	14 Grace Park Meadows, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Co. Dublin
Eircode:	D09 F2W1
Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Dolan
Service type:	Sessional
Date of Inspection:	08/10/2024
No of pre-school children:	AM 14

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).

Conditions if applicable

Not applicable.

Description of service

Meadows Montessori is a sessional service located in an urban residential setting. The service operates from 8.30am to 12pm Monday to Friday and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to sixteen children aged 2 to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. A school aged service is also provided for up to twenty-two children aged 4-12 years from 1pm to 6pm Monday to Friday. The service operates from a single room-building positioned to the rear of a residential home. Children have direct access from the care room to an outdoor play area which is adjacent to the building.

Staffing

The registered provider employs two staff to work directly with the children in the service. On the day of the inspection the registered provider and two staff were present. The registered provider works both directly with the children and oversees the day-to-day operations of 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 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 11(1)(3) and (8)-Staffing Levels.

Regulation 15 Record of a Pre-School Child.

Regulation 16 Record in Relation to Pre-School Service.

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

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

Regulation 26 Fire Safety measures.

Regulation 28 Insurance.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Montessori Room and the outdoor play area. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15, Regulation 16, Regulation 19 and Regulation 23.

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 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) 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) Two written and verified references were 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 the registered provider and two staff members had not lived outside of the state for six months or more as an adult.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that the registered provider and two staff members 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.

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)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (3) The registered provider and two staff members were working with 14 children aged 2-5 years old, during the morning of the inspection.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured there were always two adults on the premises. Evidenced by the staff roster.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of ten children's registration records were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.

(3) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(i) The registered provider ensured that there was a record of the staff roster containing the details of the staff rostered available.

(j) The person in charge confirmed that no children had received medication since the last inspection. A sample of the medication record form was reviewed, and this form contained all necessary information required if medication needed to be administered at any time.

(k) A sample of four accident and incident records were reviewed as part of the inspection. All information was completed in full.

(3) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- Children brought snacks from home. Alternative snacks and drinks were available if required. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment. Children's own drinks were available within their reach throughout the session.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there was a 'Family Wall' display and the children's artwork was displayed throughout the care room.
- There was a cosy area observed in the care room for the children to relax in as required. The cosy area was equipped with two types of soft mats, soft toys, blankets and a selection of books for reading and relaxation.
- Children were observed to access the outdoor play area this supports their social, cognitive, gross and fine motor development.

Supporting Relationships:

- During snack time the staff engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, children were given sufficient time to finish their snack.
- Transition between activities was supported. There was a visual timetable of each activity on the wall. The staff were observed to give clear guidelines of what activity was coming next and what was expected of the children. For example, staff explained how the Montessori equipment needed to be put back in place after use and hands needed to be washed before snack time. This supported the children to predict and cope with changes during the day.
- At snack time the children were observed to help set up the tables, this included the helper of the day giving out drinks and snacks. This promoted independence.

- There was evidence that the materials provided, and the weekly curriculum developed were based on children’s individual needs and emergent interests. In the Montessori room, there was an ‘Emergent Interest’ wall with the children’s names and interests. Staff discussed how they planned activities based on the children’s emerging interests.
- The service used an electronic communication application to communicate with parents daily and update them on their child’s activities. The inspector observed the two staff members greeting parents at collection time and updating parents verbally on their child’s day in the service. The registered provider discussed how staff would carry out a follow up phone call with parents if required.

Physical and Material Environment:

- There was a sufficient number of low tables and chairs to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care room.
- There was a variety of play materials and equipment available to the children according to their age and stage of development, stored in photographic labelled boxes and on low shelves to include: arts and crafts materials directly accessible to the children, a nature table, a home area with play kitchen and bakery with supporting equipment and dolls with supporting props. There was also Montessori materials supporting the areas of practical life, sensorial, language, maths and culture present. The children were observed to be partners in the programme of activities, staff were observed asking them to choose what activity they would like to partake in during Montessori work time and staff members sat with children offering support where required with the Montessori equipment used.
- Children’s language and numeracy development was observed to be supported throughout the morning with large group discussion, singing and storytelling. In addition, numeracy and literacy was promoted throughout the care room with colourful posters of letters, numbers and words.
- An outdoor play area was available for the children with a soft ground surface. The equipment and toys available included, a slide, ride on equipment and a sand box with supporting equipment providing learning opportunities for children.

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 unannounced at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. In addition, the outdoor play area was securely gated restricting unauthorised persons from gaining access to this area and to prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- The registered provider and two staff members were aware of choking hazards, including grapes. The inspector observed each staff member check every container at lunchtime for uncut grapes and any potential choking hazards.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach to the children.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- The low windows in the care room had visibility strips.
- Toys and equipment used by the children were observed to be well maintained and in a good state of repair.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary area and nappy changing area were equipped with liquid soap, warm water and hand drying facilities. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after outdoor play and after using the toilet.
- Toilet rolls and hand paper towels were hygienically dispensed.
- A pedal bin was evident within the sanitary area.
- The window was open in the care room to allow fresh air to circulate.
- Perishable food items were observed to be stored in the fridge.
- The premises was observed to be in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had individual care plans on display to identify the medication requirements and procedures in place for children who had specific allergies or medical conditions. Through discussion with staff, it was evident that staff were familiar and aware of the procedures to follow as per each care plan.
- Emergency medication was safely stored in the original box and was clearly labelled with the child's name.

Fire Safety:

- On the day of inspection, it was observed that all emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction. This helps ensure the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire Safety:

1. The details of the attendance of the children were not accurately recorded in the attendance book in the care room. The registered provider confirmed the attendance book is used in the case of emergency evacuation. Evidenced by the following:
 - At 10.40am there were fourteen children observed to be present in the care room however no children had been marked present in the attendance book. In addition, the children had not been marked out on the previous day 7 October 2024. Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.
2. The lock on the exit gate in the garden was observed to be difficult to open at 12pm. At 12.03pm one staff member went inside and returned with a ruler while the other staff member reassured the children and explained to the children the door was just a little bit stuck. The gate was opened with the aid of the ruler at 12.05pm. Staff confirmed this exit is used in the event of emergency evacuation as the fire assembly point is to the front of the building. This posed a risk to children in the event of an emergency evacuation. It is acknowledged that the registered provider sent evidence that the lock on the exit gate was replaced the following day 9 October 2024.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Fire Safety:

Corrective Action

1. Roll book to be left on the table to be filled as each child comes in. Management will discuss the importance of the roll marking in and out at staff meeting.

- Garden gate lock was difficult to open. Lock was removed and a new lock type that is easily opened by an adult and that won't become difficult to open fitted.

Preventive Action

- Roll book is left on the table each evening so the staff welcoming the children in each morning marks the children in as they arrive. All children are marked out as soon as they have left at 12 noon or if at any other time for any reason. Management discussed the importance of this at our staff meeting all staff agreed that children will be always marked in as they arrive and marked out as the leave.
- The lock that was difficult to open was removed within 12 hours of inspection. A new Bold lock has been fitted at adult height which is very easily opened by an adult and can't get jammed in any way. Staff will risk assess all doors and gates daily to prevent this recurring problem.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire Safety:

- Photographic Evidence of Attendance Book.
- Documentary Evidence of Staff Meeting Agenda.
- Photographic Evidence of new lock emailed 9 October 2024.

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 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) Documentation was available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. The last fire drill took place on 15 September 2024.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last serviced on 8 October 2024. Smoke alarms were serviced on 14 January 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 wall in the care room.

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