

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY141
Name of Service:	Merryvale Montessori and Afterschool
Address of Service:	Greendale Road, Raheny, Dublin 5.
Eircode:	D05 X5X8
Name of Registered Provider:	Simona Feraru, Sheena Keegan
Service type:	Sessional
Date of Inspection:	20/05/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 7 th Floor Brunel Building Heuston South Quarter St. John's Road West Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	L.A Webster
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

Merryvale Montessori and afterschool is a privately owned sessional service that is located in Dublin 5. It offers care and education to young children aged 2-6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The service is comprised of one montessori room.

Staffing

The registered providers employ one staff member and work directly with the children in the service. All three adults were present on the day of inspection along with an adult who provides a weekly activity for the children.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15-Record of a pre-school child.

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 providers, 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 deputy as required.
- (b) The registered providers were present when the inspector arrived and remained at the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) Discussion with the registered providers indicated that three adults work directly with the children in the service including the registered providers. The files of these staff were reviewed along with the file of an external contractor who provides a weekly activity within the service.
- (a) Two written and verified references were available from a past employer.
- (b) Four written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all three staff members and the external contractor.
- However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available in relation to one staff member who resided in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that all three staff who worked directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a)(b) Two written and verified references were not available for one adult.
- (d) There was insufficient information available to establish whether one adult required police vetting.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) had not been completed prior to one person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service following review of the staff records on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2) (a)(b) We have received 2 written references for the adult.
- (d) We have added a copy of the CV to our files. We have requested police vetting for the time spent outside of Ireland.
- (3) We have updated our policies for personnel files to include any external contractors visiting on a regular basis. We will review all our policies and procedures on a yearly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2) (a)(b) Scanned references reviewed.
- (d) Copy of CV, screenshot of email requesting application for police vetting
- (3) Personnel file policy

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered providers are sufficient to address the non-compliance under Regulation 9(2)(a) and (b) and (3) however, regulation 9 (2)(d) remains outstanding and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 providers ensured there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in the service. Three adults were observed to be available to 19 children in attendance.
- (3) Ratios were maintained during the inspection Three adults were caring for 19 children aged 3-5 years.

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-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (a)-(i) A sample of ten children’s records were reviewed as part of the inspection. All records contained the required information as required under (a)-(i) above.

(3) (c) All child records were available for 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

Basic Needs:

- On the day of inspection, the children were observed to be freely moving around the different play stations and engaging in various forms of play.
- The registered providers and staff member were observed to be sitting with children at various times throughout the morning and engaging in kind, warm conversations that extended on the children's learning. In one example, the staff member and child are talking about the sunny weather, and the staff member extended this conversation to the children at the table by asking 'whose mam or dad works outdoors?' extending on the children's knowledge about their families and sense of belonging.
- Children's individual, labelled water bottles were available for the children to drink freely.
- During snack time, children's lunch boxes were delivered by two leaders chosen on the morning, this promoted a sense of independence for the children delivering the food and a sense of classroom belonging as children had their names individually called.

Supporting Relationships:

- The registered providers and staff member throughout the morning were observed to be very kind, considerate and warm in their interactions with the children. This was evident through conversations, open ended questions and ensuring that the children's voices were heard.
- Throughout their activities, children were supported should they have needed, and choice given to the activities they wished to engage in.
- From observation, the children were supported by the registered provider to learn about caring for others, an example of this was at the butterfly table where the children were caring and nurturing caterpillar's until they transform into butterflies.
- This was further evidence throughout the Montessori room where a 'family wall' displayed the children's family and interests. This was above the cosy/reading corner, where children had the opportunity to sit and view their families or tell one another about their pictures.

- There was a strong emphasis on children’s sense of identity with their own hooks for bags and jackets with their pictures on it.
- Prior to snack time, the registered provider engaged in a mindfulness activity with the children to relax before eating. It was very evident that the children enjoyed this activity. Additionally, the registered provider prompted a playful number counting activity with the children through five languages that supported the children’s native languages, ensuring a strong sense of belonging and inclusion.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The Montessori room was very spacious and bright, offering plenty of natural light to illuminate the space for the children. The tones of the room were soft and warm, inviting a very relaxed atmosphere.
- Children’s tables are developmentally appropriate for the age and size of the children.
- The environment offered a lot of natural materials for the children to avail from such as wooden blocks, puzzles, fine gross activities that promote sorting and pouring.
- There were people friendly plants located within the environment that gives a sense of nature and growth to the children.
- Each area is well designed such as a farm station, self-care area, reading/cosy area, art area and kitchen area.
- There was good floor space for the children to engage in art or block activities should they choose.

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 door to the service was secure upon the inspector’s arrival. The registered provider attended to the door to allow access to the children, parents/guardians attending the service.
- A second internal door into the Montessori room is electronically coded to allow entry to staff, parents/guardians and authorised persons. This prevents any unauthorised persons entering the Montessori room without the registered providers knowledge.
- The Montessori room door was securely locked throughout the inspection process; this prevented any children leaving the service unsupervised.

- All cleaning equipment was safely stored and out of reach of any children.
- There were no visible signs of any trailing flexes or wires within the Montessori room.
- Window blinds were in good condition with a plastic pull wand attached to open and shut the blinds.
- Children’s lunchboxes were securely stored in a fridge to prevent any food from spoiling.
- Through observation at snack time, the registered providers and staff closely monitored the children’s lunches for any potential food choking hazards. The registered providers further evidenced that potential food choking hazards are frequently communicated to the parents
- Through discussion with the registered provider, it was disclosed that the service operates a popcorn free zone. Additionally, while there were no children or staff present or registered on the day with a nut allergy, a nut free zone would be enforced should the occasion rise.
- The registered provider demonstrated their knowledge surrounding beaded jewellery and advised that they would be immediately removed if a child was wearing them.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper handtowels dispensed from the wall mounted unit in the sanitary area were readily available for hygienic handwashing practices and drying.
- Child sized operational toilets were available to the children that were partitioned by a wall and two doors that ensured the children’s privacy and dignity.
- A foot operated pedal bin was available to dispose of any paper towels or waste.
- When transitioning towards snack time, the registered providers promoted good handwashing practices that supported the children’s personal hygiene.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not given at the time of inspection; written parental consent was available in paper format should medication be required to be administered to a child. The registered providers and staff were familiar with the practices required for the administration of medication to a child attending the service.

Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills had been carried out and the registered providers and staff were familiar with the fire safety evacuation procedures of the service.
- Fire exits were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one adult; however, this disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. We have applied to renew the adult's garda vetting. This is currently in process. We have updated our policies for Garda Vetting to include any external contractors visiting on a regular basis. We will review all our policies and procedures on a yearly basis. Garda vetting will be renewed every 3 years

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Scan of Garda Vetting Form NVB 1,
Screenshot showing confirmation of Garda vetting application received
PDF of Garda Vetting policy

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered providers 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) The registered provider was trained in First Aid Response (FAR), expiry date of October 2026 and was immediately available to the children attending the service. Additionally, a staff member was trained in FAR, expiry date of October 2026 in the event of the registered providers absence.
- (2) (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, and unobstructed if needed to access quickly within the Montessori room.
- (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available at all times to the children attending 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*
- (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 record in writing was kept of all fire drills that had taken place on the premises, the last recorded fire drill was dated the 27 April 2025.
- (b) There were records available detailing the maintenance of the firefighting equipment dated the 06 November 2024 and the fire/smoke detection system in the premises on the 19 October 2024.
- (4) Notices were visibly displayed, detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

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 pre-school service was adequately insured, with an expiry date of March 2026.