

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY202
Name of Service:	St. Peter's Montessori School
Address of Service:	18 St. Peters Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7
Eircode:	D07 W026
Name of Registered Provider:	Catherine Courtney
Service type:	Sessional
Date of Inspection:	07/04/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	13
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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
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland and E Griffin
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

St Peters Montessori is a private service located in a residential area in Dublin 7. Operating from a two-story house, the service comprises of two care rooms known as Upstairs room and Downstairs room. It accommodates children from the age of 2 years and 8 months to 5 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) scheme, offering two daily sessions: a morning session from 9:00am to 12:00pm and an afternoon session from 12:30 pm to 3:30pm Monday to Friday. Additionally, the service has a fully enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service and employs three staff; the deputy person in charge and two childcare staff, one of which is employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). Additionally, the service has an appointed emergency cover person. On the day of inspection all four staff were present working directly with 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, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The scope of the inspection included the two care rooms. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under: Regulation 15, 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.

Additional Information

7 April 2025

An immediate action notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection in relation to a potential significant risk identified under Regulation 23. Further details are available in the body of the report. A response which adequately addressed the concern was received on 8 April 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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.*

(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 designated person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and remained present for the duration of the inspection.
- (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own roles and responsibilities.

- (2) Conversation with the registered provider confirmed that there are four adults currently employed in the service including the registered provider, one of which was new to the service since the last inspection on 13 October 2022. Additionally, the service has an appointed emergency cover person. The following records were available for the five adults.
- (a) Five written references were available from past employers and were appropriately verified.
 - (b) Five written references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer and were appropriately verified.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for five adults. 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 available for three adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (3) Documentary evidence was available to show that the checks required under (2) had been completed prior to the start date of the staff whose files were reviewed.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that the five adults 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.

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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs. There were four adults available to twenty-eight children. There were three adults available to thirteen children in the afternoon.
- (3) The required adult to child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection.

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 files were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.

(3) (c) 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,

Compliance Information

1 (a)

Basic needs

- The atmosphere at lunchtime was relaxed and pleasant with positive social interactions observed among staff and children. Lunch was provided daily by the parents; the meals included a variety of foods ensuring a balanced nutritious selection for the children in line with the services healthy eating policy.
- Drinking water was available and accessible to children throughout the morning.
- Staff were observed to sing songs in Irish and English with children throughout the day. Singing with children provides opportunity for shared experiences, exposes them to a variety of different sounds and builds on their vocabulary supporting their language development.
- Staff were observed to provide advance notice of transitions ensuring children were well prepared and the transition remained seamless.
- The presence of a family wall, birthday time display and the children's artwork on display throughout the care rooms demonstrated a sense of belonging for the children.
- Children's independence was encouraged and supported throughout the day for example packing away lunch boxes, tidying up following play and using the toilet independently.
- Beanbags and mats were available to children who required a break from activities. In addition, the outdoor play area had tables and benches for the children to sit and rest during outdoor play time.

Supporting Relationships

- Children were given the freedom to make choices and were observed to move freely around the room following their own interests and engaging in positive interactions with their peers.
- Children's voices were heard, staff created space where children felt safe to express their views and immediately responded to children's verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Staff were observed speaking to children in warm gentle tones, interactions that are respectful and consistent support children to become competent confident learners.

- The service has established a network with the local school. Staff advised that the principal of the local school comes to the service to introduce himself to the children to support children in smoothly transitioning to primary school.
- Staff were observed to encourage children's learning dispositions for example modelling patience, friendliness, playfulness and active listening.
- The registered provider discussed how the service communicates with parents via telephone calls, text messages and letters. Additionally, the service provides regular informal opportunities to consult with parents/families and share information about the child's daily experiences and development.

Physical and Material Environment

- The care rooms were laid out with a variety of equipment and materials appropriate to the developmental needs of the children attending the service.
- Materials were freely available to the children and stored in a way that allowed children to independently find and return items of interest with ease. In addition, the care rooms had Montessori equipment supporting the areas of practical life, sensorial, language, maths and culture present.
- Children were observed to comfortably move around the care room without any obstructions.
- There was sufficient child size tables and chairs to allow groups of children to play and eat together.
- The equipment and materials in the outdoor area supported children's play, movement and exploration. For example, there was a mud kitchen, chalk board, picnic benches, a sandbox, slide and a planting area.

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:

- Toys and play equipment used by the children were observed to be safe for the age group, maintained and in good condition.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored out of reach of children.
- Staff were aware of choking hazards at snack time. Grapes brought into the service from home were cut into halves before being served to the children.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use in the sanitary areas and the outdoor area to support effective hygiene practices.
- Liquid soap, warm water and single use paper towels were available at wash hand basins.
- Children were supported to wash their hands after toileting and before mealtimes.
- Windows in the care rooms were observed to be open which allowed for circulation of air and reduced the risk of cross infection.
- All perishable food brought by the children from home for morning snack time were observed to be stored in a fridge reducing the risk of bacteria multiplying.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated knowledge of the procedure to safely administer medication to a child and documentation was available for use should it be required in line with the services administration of medication policy.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection.
- Staff demonstrated knowledge of the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.
- Children's attendance books were monitored to ensure staff knew how many children were present in the care rooms. This ensured a safe evacuation of the children in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A fire access window on the first floor was unlocked and accessible to the children. This posed a potential significant risk of injury to the children. An immediate action notice was issued. It is acknowledged that the registered provider responded, and the risk was mitigated.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A safety latch was fitted on the upper top corner of the window, this is not accessible to children but can be reached by adults in the event of a fire in the building.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence documenting the alterations made to the window was submitted for review.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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) There was evidence to show that two adults hold certification in First Aid Response training, and both were available for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) (a) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and stored safely in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on a shelf in the care room.
(b) The first aid box was observed to be easily available to the adults caring for 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 written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on 11 March 2025. In addition, there was evidence to show that practice fire drills are carried out during the morning and afternoon sessions.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was up to date. Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were serviced in March 2025.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed around the building.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance for the number of children in attendance. The insurance certificate was valid until 27 November 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The interior walls, floors and ceilings of the rooms in use by the service appeared in a good state of repair and maintenance.
- (b) The entrance into the service was appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised. The outdoor area was securely enclosed by walls and a gate fitted with a bolt to ensure children's safety.
- (c) The light fittings in rooms were fitted with protective coverings. Openable windows provided in the care room for both natural ventilation and natural day light.
- (d) The service was clean and hygienic and documented up to date cleaning records were available and displayed in the kitchen area.
- (e) Toilets and wash hand basins were located off the care rooms both upstairs and downstairs. There were four toilets available for children and a separate adult toilet. The water supply was thermostatically controlled and hand washing facilities were suitable and adequate.