

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015DY324

Name of Service: Minerva Montessori

Address of Service: North House, Dartry, Dartry, Dublin 6.

Eircode: D06 E030

Name of Registered Provider: Blanche Burke

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 12/02/2026

No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	27
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Duff H. Sutherland M. Bermingham
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

Description of service

Minerva Montessori is a privately owned service which was established by the current registered provider in 2009.

Early education and care is provided for children aged 2 years to 6 years between the hours of 8am and 2pm; a concurrent sessional service also operates from 9am until 12.30pm.

The service operates from an adapted listed building in a residential area of south county Dublin. Five rooms over three levels are provided for the care of children, and a small enclosed outdoor space is also available.

Staffing

There are a total of 9 adults employed in the service including the registered provider. The registered provider does not work directly with the children but is available for support when necessary. On the day of the inspection, there were 7 staff caring for 55 children. A contractor employed to provide an exercise and dance class and a student were also present.

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, records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29 Premises.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 inspectors wish 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

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required, both were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

No additional staff members have been employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 20 March 2025. However, the inspection included a review of the required documentation for a student on placement and a contractor employed to provide an exercise and dance class. Both adults were present on the day of inspection.

Garda vetting disclosures were assessed for each of the nine staff members employed in the service. The following documentation was available;

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for nine staff members, student and contractor employed to work in the service. Garda vetting disclosures from all adults were assessed to determine compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)
(a)(b)
Although it is acknowledged that 2 references for one adult were available, they had not been verified prior to them commencing employment in the service.
Two references for one adult had not been sought or verified prior to them commencing placement in the service.
(d) Information was not available to ascertain whether one adult required International Police Vetting.
(3)
The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were not carried out prior to two adult commencing employment or placement in the service as follows:
Two verified references for two adults were not in place prior to them commencing employment or placement in the service.
Information was not available to ascertain whether one adult required International Police Vetting.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated that two references for two adults have been verified and are now on file, the service has created a checklist to ensure all documentation is in place before a staff member or student commences employment in the service. The person requiring police vetting since has left the service therefore police vetting is no longer required.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on 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.

(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.

Non-Compliance Information

1) An adequate number of adults were not working directly with the preschool children at all times in the M1 room on the day of inspection as detailed below in point (2).

(2) In the M1 room from 12:30pm to 13:15 pm one adult was observed caring for nine children. One child was between 2-3 years and eight children were between 3-5 years. The minimum adult to child ratio for 2-3 years in full day care is one adult to six children and child ratio for 3-5 years in full day care is one adult to eight children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated that the service was short staffed on the day of inspection and relief staff were not available, in future staff members will move children to a different room to ensure no staff member is working over ratio.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next 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) The records of 10 children who were attending the service were reviewed and contained the following particulars:

- (a) The name and date of birth of each child.
- (b) The date on which each child first attended the service.
- (c) There was an area on the registration form where the date when a child would cease to attend the service will be recorded.
- (d) The names, addresses and telephone numbers of parents were recorded and information where parents can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service were also available.

- (e) Names and contact details of other adults who were authorised to collect children were available.
 - (f) The documentation available supported the recording of specific illnesses, allergies, disabilities and dietary preferences for children.
 - (g) The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was available.
 - (h) Record of immunisations received by the child was detailed.
 - (i) Written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.
- (3)(c) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) was open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

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 inspectors observed appropriate care practices in place in the service during the inspection. Staff members were attentive and responsive to the needs of the children throughout the day and were observed to respond to children in a calm and relaxed manner throughout the inspection. The staff provided children with comfort and reassurance when needed. Staff were observed to support children during conflict resolution or in completion of tasks. Children who required additional support were provided with alternative activities and tasks that interested them.

Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to new activities and to alert them of mealtimes. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment. Children brought lunch from home which was closely monitored by staff for choking hazards. The service provides a hot meal for children who attend on a full-time basis. Meal times were social occasions with children and adults sitting together having the opportunity to chat about the morning's activities. Staff provided children with help when needed. Drinks were readily available within the care rooms.

Children were encouraged to clean up after themselves and assisted to clean their faces and hands at appropriate times.

Child sized tables and chairs allowed the children to eat and engage in tabletop activities. There was evidence that equipment and materials provided were based on the children's individual needs and emergent interests. The programme of activities is offered through the Montessori curriculum with time allocated for free play. Materials and equipment were laid out on low level shelving units and accessible to children. The care rooms had cushions and floor mats to facilitate rest or provide a place for children to take a break from activities.

The outdoor area was equipped with toys and materials to support play experiences. On the day of inspection, the children took part in an exercise and dance class facilitated by an external company. All children were afforded the opportunity to take part, and staff were observed to actively join in.

Engagement with families and parents is facilitated by the daily sharing of information on the child's day. This is shared through conversations at drop off and collection and supported by electronic means. On the day of inspection transitions from preschool to home were observed to be friendly, informative and engaging to parents or guardians collecting 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 inspectors arrived at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorized persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. In addition, the outdoor play area was enclosed, restricting unauthorized persons from gaining access to this area and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary facilities were equipped with paper towel, liquid soap, and pedal operated bin.
- The children were supported by staff members to wash their hands at appropriate intervals throughout the inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.
- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire and evacuation procedures were on display throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- In the M3 sanitary area, an electrical cable from an air purifier machine was observed trailing onto the floor and around the wall into the socket in the main room. The cable was in reach of children during the inspection; this poses a potential risk of injury to a child.
- In the M5 room, and the sanitary area used by the children in M2 room, cleaning products were stored on a low shelf and accessible to children. It is acknowledged that a staff member moved the products to a high shelf when the inspector brought it to their attention. This poses a potential risk of harm to children if they accessed them. The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider following the last inspection of the service on 20 March 2025 did not prevent the re-occurrence of the non-compliance under Regulation 23.

3. In the outdoor area used by the children, a section of the fence was observed to be broken, sharp and protruding. This poses a potential risk of injury to a child.
4. In the M1 room the water temperature in the children's sanitary area was recorded at 56.1 degrees, this poses a risk of scalding to a child. It is acknowledged that the registered provider took steps to reduce the water temperature when the inspector brought it to their attention.

Infection Control:

5. The bins in use for disposal of waste in the M2 and M3 rooms, including soiled nasal tissues and waste food, had swing lids. Children and staff were observed to use their hands to open the bins. This poses a potential risk of cross contamination.
6. In M2, M3 and M5 rooms the vinyl covering on the children's sofas was observed to be worn and torn in the corners with the inner foam is exposed. The sofas cannot be effectively cleaned and pose a potential risk of cross contamination to children.
7. In M2 room the vinyl covering on the mats used in the children's rest/quiet areas was observed to be worn and torn. The mats cannot be effectively cleaned and pose a potential risk of cross contamination to children.

Administration of Medication:

8. Some of the procedures for the administration of medication were at variance with the policy and associated procedures in place in the service and posed a risk of harm to a child as follows;
 - Documentation reviewed contained evidence to show that staff fill out consent for the administration of medications to children and then subsequently request signature from parent/guardian. Staff members confirmed this practice.
 - Evidence of administration of an asthma inhaler was reviewed; no pre-consent documentation had been sought to inform staff of the procedures or amount of medication to administer. The medicine policy states that medicine will not be administered to children if consent is not signed in advance.
 - Documentation was reviewed that showed an asthma inhaler had been administered by a member of staff however no witness signature was recorded.
 - An auto-injector for a child was observed to be out of date, staff members informed the inspector that the child no longer required the medication, the medicine policy in place states that medication that is out of date or no longer required will be returned to parents for disposal.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has stated:

1. The air purifier has been removed from M3 room and staff have been reminded not to plug anything into the area
2. The cleaning products have been removed from the sanitary area used by M2 and the M5 room, staff have been reminded about using extra vigilance when storing cleaning products, the manager and owner will check the storage of cleaning products weekly using a checklist.
3. The fence has been repaired. Staff will carry out regular checks in the garden area.
4. A temperature gauge has now been put on the main tank; staff will carry out regular temperature checks on the water.

Infection Control:

5. Foot operated bins are now in place in all classrooms. The registered provider has stated they will replace any bins if they break.
6. The torn sofas have been removed and replaced with cushions.
7. The torn children's mats have been removed and replaced with new mats.

Administration of Medication:

8. All staff have been reminded of the medication policy, and staff have explained the procedure to parents relating to pre-consent for administering medication. The autoinjector has been returned to parents. The manager will check the medicine procedure weekly to ensure all paperwork is completed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Infection Control:

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Administration of Medication:

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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)(b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors were serviced in March 2025.
- (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 rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

- 1 (a) Documentation was not available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced regularly. The last fire drill was carried out on 18 November 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated that two fire drills have been carried out since the inspection. A member of staff has now been assigned the responsibility for carrying out and documenting fire drills.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Non-Compliance Information

(e) In the M4 room, the door leading into the sanitary area had been removed from the frame. The 2 cubicles inside the area did not have doors to provide children with privacy when using the toilet. The sanitary area leads directly into the children's care room therefore children were not afforded privacy when using the toilet.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated that the doors on the two cubicles have been replaced. They will not be removed again.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation in the form of photographs have been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance.