

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY365
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Name of Service:	Little Steps Montessori
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Address of Service:	14a Beech Hill Estate, Donnybrook, Dublin 4, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D04 YR53
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Name of Registered Provider:	Elaine McGrath
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	Not Applicable
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate - Tusla Child and Family Agency Brunel Building, Floor 7 Heuston South Quarter Dublin 8, D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	M Bermingham
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Little Steps Montessori is registered to provide sessional care for 22 children aged 2-6 years. Opening hours are 09:00-12:30. The service operates from the ground floor of an adapted domestic dwelling. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area to the rear.

Staffing

The service employs one staff member, who along with the registered provider, were present on the day of inspection and working directly with 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.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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 named person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The person in charge and the deputy were rostered to be present on the premises for the duration of the opening hours.
- (c) A clear management structure was in place as evidenced by observing the operation of the service.

(2)

There was one staff member employed in the service as confirmed through discussion with the registered provider. On review of relevant documentation, the following vetting considerations were found:

- (b) Two written and verified references from sources other than a past employer
- (c) Garda vetting renewal in accordance with the Early Years Inspectorate's Regulatory notice requiring renewal every three years for all adults employed

(4)

One staff member working directly with children held the required qualification.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection; there were 2 adults working with 18 children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

(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

(1)(a)(b) The following observations demonstrated how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service and how appropriate and suitable care practices were in place:

Children ate lunch that was provided by parents which reflected the service's healthy eating policy. Snack time was relaxed and unrushed affording the children an opportunity for social chat with their peers. The adults supported the children to prepare for lunch and tidy up afterwards. Drinking water was provided in children's beakers and made available throughout the session including at snack time. Children were supported to use the toilet independently.

The adult interactions with children were warm, encouraging and playful. An adult assisted the children resolve a problem in a positive way. Children's voices were listened and responded to appropriately and addressed the children's needs. The adults supported the children's transitions from tidy up to circle time, preparing for meals, preparing for outside and going home; transitions were aided by a visual daily routine. The routine and play experiences were child led and learning content was detailed on a written plan and reflected in the discussions and activities on the day.

Children's identity and belonging was fostered through displays of children's artwork, birthdays, and photographs of children and their families. There were also photographs on display of the children at home with the service's cuddly dinosaur; this demonstrates a connection between children's home life and the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The children were occupied and engaged throughout the session using a wide variety of materials that were easily accessible on low open shelving within a clearly laid out environment. Learning areas included Montessori work, a home corner for pretend play, an art area, and a cosy area for children to look at books and rest. A portion of materials derive from the Montessori philosophy with additional items to include wooden and plastic blocks, animals, wheeled toys and tracks, and dress up. There were natural materials available throughout. Children were highly engaged outside playing in small social groups, for example, on a balance beam, resting and having a chat with friends, mark making with chalk on a large wall, and playing a running and building game. The outside space was artificially surfaced.

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

The following measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children and provide a safe environment, as evidenced by observation of practice, a review of the environment and documentation, and through discussion with staff:

General Safety:

- The entrance into the service was appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised.
- Window openings were safe at a high level.
- The outdoor area was secure and fully enclosed.
- Toys and play equipment were in good condition.

Infection Control:

- The premises, environment, equipment and materials appeared clean and were maintained in a hygienic condition. Cleaning procedures were displayed.
- Effective hand washing was facilitated through the provision of warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels. Children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including before eating and after using the toilet.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Lunch boxes that included perishable food items were stored in the fridge in line with national nutritional standards.
- Waste was managed appropriately through the use of foot pedal bins and the storage area for waste outside was inaccessible to children.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was clearly labelled, within its expiry date, and stored in the original container and out of reach of children.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency fire doors were unobstructed.
- Staff outlined the procedure to evacuate children in the event of a fire and knew the location of the assembly point in line with the services procedures that were displayed.

Non-Compliance Information

The service did not ensure that the following adequate measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children and to provide a safe environment as follows:

General Safety:

1. A flex trailed from an air purifier unit along the floor causing a trip hazard and risk of injury to a child.

Infection Control:

2. The covering on the children's couch was torn exposing the inside foam which could not be effectively cleaned, thus posing a risk of cross infection.

Administration of Medication:

3. Prior parental consent was not obtained to administer fever reducing medication in the event of a child requiring it.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider stated that the air purifier flex was positioned securely behind the shelving unit.

Infection Control:

The registered provider stated that arm covers were purchased and placed on the couch.

Administration of Medication:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The registered provider stated that along with the medical question on the application form a fever reducing medication consent question was compiled and filled in by parents.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Evidence was submitted by the registered provider.

Infection Control:

Evidence was submitted by the registered provider.

Administration of Medication:

Evidence was submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The inspector reviewed the responses and evidence submitted by the registered provider and the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 were 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)

The registered provider ensured that a person trained as a first aid responder was available to children at all times, as evidenced by a review of the roster. A current certificate of first aid responder(FAR) training was available for two adults working in the service.

(2) A suitably equipped first aid box was available.

(a) The first aid box was stored safely in a conspicuous position in the room adjacent to the Montessori room.

(b) The first aid box was available to children at all times.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) Fire drills were completed monthly as evidenced through a review of written records and through discussions with the registered provider and staff member. The last fire drill was recorded to have taken place on 15 April 2026.
 - (b) A record was available of the number type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. Records showed that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system was serviced on 22 September 2025.
- (4)
- A notice of the evacuation procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous location within the service at the exit door.