

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY391
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Name of Service:	Little Smarties Montessori
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Address of Service:	War Memorial Hall, Rathfarnham Road, Terenure, Dublin 6W, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D6W RV10
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sarah Shields
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Carysfort House, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	L Magee & O Quill
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

Little Smarties Montessori school is located in an urban setting in Terenure, south county Dublin. A service is provided to children aged between 2.5-6 years. The service currently provides two sessional services from 8:30am to 12 midday and 9am to 12:30 Monday to Friday. The premises has two preschool rooms called the bird room and the Oak room. The service has a kitchen, a large indoor hall and an outdoor area which is located to the front of the building.

Staffing

There are five staff members employed to work in the service including the registered provider.

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 and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection plan was to assess compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 (1)(a) (b) (2) (a)(b)(c)(d) and (4) Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11(1), (3), (8c) Staffing Levels

Regulation 23 Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

Regulation 25 First Aid (1)&(2)

Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures (1) (a&b) and (4)

Regulation 28 Insurance

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

Immediate Action Notice Issued 5 November 2025

Regulation 23 –Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the person in charge. Concerns were identified as an immediate and significant risk or is likely to be a risk to the safety of the children attending the service which is contrary to the requirement of Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.

It is acknowledged the registered provider responded to this concern on 6 November 2025; the response submitted addressed the concern. Further information regarding the outcome of this non-compliance can be found as detailed under Regulation 23.

Corrective Actions and Preventative Actions (CAPA)

The Early years inspectorate received the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) on 12 December 2025. The CAPA plan contained insufficient information to meet regulatory compliance. A second opportunity was afforded to the registered provider and was due back on 23 December 2025. On 5 January 2026, an extension was afforded to the registered provider until 7 January 2026, however no response was received. This triggered a Regulatory compliance meeting. The corrective action and preventative actions were submitted on 15 January 2026.

Regulatory Compliance Meeting (RCM) held on 21 January 2026

A RCM was held as the corrective actions and preventative actions were not submitted to address the non-compliances within the agreed timelines.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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.

(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 person in charge and a named person to deputise.
 - (b) The person in charge and a named deputy were on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)
- Following a discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed no new staff had been employed since the last inspection on 5 February 2024. On completion of the last inspection, Regulation (2)(a) (b) (d) and (4) were compliant and therefore not assessed on this inspection. Therefore, the inspection of Regulation 9 was limited to the requirements detailed in 9(2)(c), this was inspected for all 5 adults employed in the service as evidenced below:
- (2) (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all five adults. However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all adults employed to work in the service, as detailed under Regulation 23.

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)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working with the children when the inspectors arrived unannounced at the service. There were 4 staff members working directly with 25 children.
- (3) The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained at all times. There were four adults working directly with twenty-seven pre-school children on the day of inspection.
- (8) (c) Two adults were on the premises at all times.

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

- 1(b) All children bring in a light lunch from home. The children were observed chatting happily while they ate their lunches. Staff sat with the children while they were eating and encouraged this relaxed environment. Children were supported with toileting as needed and staff were observed caring for children in a respectful manner. Interactions with the children were warm and sensitive. Transitioning from one activity to another were smooth

and it was evidenced the children were familiar with these. All children played in the outdoor play area and some played games in the adjoining hall. The children moved freely both in the hall and outdoors and were engaged in different games with the staff.

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 entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised. Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children. The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order. Emergency exits were clear.

Infection Control:

The service had an infection control policy in place. This was evidenced with the following:

The children were supported to wash their hands and/or use hand sanitiser at regular intervals including after using the toilet, outdoor play and before mealtimes.

A cleaning schedule was in place and maintained to ensure the service, equipment and materials were regularly cleaned.

Administration of Medication:

Staff demonstrated, through discussion, that they were familiar with the procedures and practices in place for the administration of medication in line with the service's policy on medication administration.

Fire Safety:

Staff were aware of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire. Regular fire drills were conducted in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. An Immediate Action Notice was given to the person in charge, on the day of inspection, as the water temperature in the disability bathroom where the children were washing their hands was 59.6°C. This posed a risk of scalding.
2. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 2 adults employed to work in the service.
3. The lock on the men's toilet / staff toilet door was broken and unlocked on the day of inspection. This bathroom has 3 urinals which all contained fragrant deodorisers. These are within reach of the children and if ingested could cause a risk of poisoning. It is acknowledged the children were supervised while using the sanitary facilities, on the day of inspection.

Infection Control:

1. During the inspection, perishable items contained in the children's lunch boxes were not refrigerated prior to lunch time, posing the risk of gastrointestinal illness.
2. The bin in the ladies bathroom was a push lidded bin and not a foot operated pedal bin. This increases the risk of cross contamination after the children have washed their hands.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Before the service open "morning checks" are conducted. The thermostat is checked that it is at the correct temperature and the form is signed by relevant staff member.
2. Garda vetting for 2 members of staff has been updated and are on file. Personnel files are checked by the person in charge and the office manager to check expiry dates of all staff vetting.
3. The bolt on the toilet door is now fixed and in correct working order. There is a notice on the door to remind all staff to lock the door after each use. The registered provider confirmed staff will ensure this door is locked will be included in the service's daily checklist. The fragrant deodorisers will be removed from the three urinals.

Infection Control:

1. Parents have now been instructed not to include perishable items in the children's snack boxes to eliminate any threat of perishable items causing illness to a child.
2. A bin with a foot operated pedal is now in the ladies toilet.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation was submitted to support the corrective and preventative actions.

Summary Comment

The actions as stated by the registered provider address the non-compliances identified. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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) A person trained as a First Aid Responder (FAR) was immediately available to the children at all times during the opening hours of the service on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was adequately stored and easily accessible in each care room in the service.

(b) A first aid box was always available to the adults and children in 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.
 - (b) There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system had been serviced as required.
- (4)
- The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had evidence of insurance cover for up to 32 preschool children attending a sessional service. This insurance cover was valid until 27/03/2026.