

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL052		
Name of Service:	Little Scholars Montessori & Childcare Limited		
Address of Service:	Lusk Community Hall, Chapel Green, Lusk, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K45 E090		
Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona Gregan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	08/01/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM Not applicable.
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15		
Inspection undertaken by:	Y Kelly		
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.		

Description of service

Little Scholars Montessori & Childcare Limited is a privately-owned sessional early years service which was established by the registered provider in 2014. An early years service has been provided in these premises since the 1990's. The service operates from 9.00am to 12.00 midday for 38 weeks each year, facilitating eligible children to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme each weekday. The service caters for a maximum of 22 pre-school children from 2 to 6 years of age. School aged children are accommodated in the service with a breakfast club in the morning and school aged childcare in the afternoon.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager and 3 early years practitioners, all of whom work directly with the children and who were all present on the day of the inspection. This included two members of staff employed to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs, in a post which is funded by the minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). There were 2 staff members providing cover on the day of the inspection and an administrator who works off site. The registered provider is not present in the service on a daily basis and usually manages administrative duties off-site, however attended the closing meeting in person on the day of the inspection.

Methodology

Tusla 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Montessori room.

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 provider, manager, 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.

(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 needed.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09.25am and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The files for 7 staff members were reviewed. Garda vetting was reviewed for 8 adults to include the registered provider. The following was recorded:

(a) Ten written validated references were available from past employers.

(b) Four written validated references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 8 adults including the registered provider. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) International Police vetting was available for 2 adults whose files were reviewed who had lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 7 staff members whose files were reviewed and who may work directly with the children in the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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 the inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 4 staff members, including the manager working with 14 children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years 11 months on the morning of the inspection, two of whom were employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Mealtimes were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Staff sat and ate with the children at snack time and engaged in conversations with the children. Children's snack and water bottles were brought from home. Snack consisted of ham sandwiches, yoghurt and fruit. Children's water bottles were accessible to the children throughout the session and children were observed to take drinks of water from their bottles as needed.
- There was a cosy area in the service with two child sized soft sofas and a soft mat for children's rest and relaxation. A selection of books supported storytelling opportunities and children's language development.
- Children's independence was supported. Children were free to choose materials independently from defined interest areas. Children also used the bathroom independently with staff support as needed. Children were given responsibilities as 'Helper of the day', such as helping to give out the children's lunch boxes at snack time.

Supporting relationships and interactions around children:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service. The early years practitioners engaged in play with the children.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there was a 'Family Wall' displayed at children's level with photographs of children's families and a birthday chart included children's photographs. Children's artwork was displayed in the Montessori room at children's level.
- Staff discussed that they communicate with parents to share information using an online messaging application.

Physical and material environment:

- The furniture provided in the care room was low level and appropriate to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care room. Toys and equipment were visible and accessible to children on low level shelving which facilitated children's independence in play. The room was divided into different areas of interest which provided opportunities for a variety of spontaneous play experiences and choice for children. There was a cosy/book area with two child sized soft sofas and a soft mat for children to sit and relax and a selection of books which supported storytelling opportunities and children's language development. There was a table with art materials to include paper, glue, glitter snowflakes, lollipop sticks, feathers and scissors to support creative art for children where children were observed making 'winter pictures'. There was a home corner with wooden kitchen, dress up clothes, buggies and dolls and small world items such as people, dinosaurs, and transportation toys such as wooden train tracks and wooden trains to support imaginative and interactive play. There was a construction area with foam mat for floor play with construction materials to include foam blocks, foam bricks, wooden blocks, tuff tray with plastic building bricks and workbench with toy drill and toy hammer. There was a range of Montessori materials such as wooden cylinders and pink tower for early numeracy development and sandpaper letters for early literacy development. There were tabletop materials such as jigsaws to support fine motor development.
- An outdoor play area was provided to the side of the premises with an impact absorbing surface and secure by walls. Gated fencing separated this space from another enclosed area to the front of the premises, the surface of which was predominantly paved. Along the edge of the outdoor area there were planting boxes and water tray provided. There were two slides, ride on bikes, see-saws and scooters and children were observed playing 'hopscotch' all of which promoted gross motor and fundamental movement skills. There was a large chalk board with chalk provided which provided opportunities for mark making and creativity.

Programme of Activities:

- Conversations with staff ascertained that the service had a play-based child led curriculum and with elements of the Montessori curriculum.
- Staff carry out planning based on children's emerging interests and themes such as Healthy Eating which informs the curriculum.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; a timeline of the daily routine using photographs was displayed in the care room at the children's level to support them with the transitions. The children

engaged well with tidying up and tidied away play materials when they had finished. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young 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:

- On arrival to the service, the inspector observed that the door was secure and monitored by staff. The inspector was asked to sign into the visitors' book on arrival.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed and secured and was surfaced with an impact absorbing surface and paved.

Infection Control:

- Children's lunches which were brought from home, were refrigerated to prevent spoiling of perishable items.
- Children were observed to hand wash independently after use of the toilet, and before lunchtime, and this was encouraged and supported by staff.

Administration of Medication:

- No child required medication to be administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. One Garda vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. Grapes were not observed to be sliced in half for one child on the day of the inspection. This posed a choking hazard for the child. It is acknowledged that a staff member cut the remainder of the grapes when brought to their attention by the inspector.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Garda Vetting disclosure was applied for and received for 1 staff member.
2. The Healthy Eating Policy has been reviewed and updated with a picture of how to cut grapes properly. The manager sent out a reminder communication to all parents in the service to please make sure all children's fruit is cut up properly to prevent a choking hazard.

Preventive Action:

General Safety:

1. The owner, manager and administration staff member met and agreed to set an expiry reminder on their HR application to tell them when a staff members Garda Vetting needs to be updated-every 3 years.
2. All staff have now been informed of the update on the policy and know that they will need to check all children's lunchboxes to make sure all fruit is cut up properly to prevent a choking hazard. If they find uncut fruit, either it is sent home or needs to be cut up properly before serving to the child.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Garda vetting disclosure for 1 adult.
- Photograph of Garda vetting expiry reminder.
- Updated Healthy Eating Policy.
- Photograph attached of communication to parents and staff.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been 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 an adequate number of staff were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and a staff member trained in FAR was available on the premises throughout the opening hours of the service. Two staff members were trained in First Aid Response (FAR), both of whom were present on the day of the inspection.
- (2)(a) An adequately stocked first aid box was observed in the kitchen of the service.
- (b) The first aid box was stored out of the reach of the children but available to staff as needed.

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) The registered provider ensured the following:
- (a) A record of monthly fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on 19 December 2025.
 - (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the hallway and Montessori room of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(b) There was no up-to-date official maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises.

Non-compliance under regulation 26 (b) in relation to the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was identified on the previous inspection dated 23 October 2023. The corrective and preventive action submitted following inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(b) The registered provider organised for the Fire Company to go out to the service and inspect all fire extinguishers and smoke detectors on the premises.

Preventive Action

(b) A reminder has been set in HR documents to arrange inspections every year going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Fire extinguisher certificate and fire extinguisher service report dated 20/01/2026.
- Fire detection and alarm system certificate of servicing and testing dated 09/01/2026.
- Photographic evidence of reminders set in HR documents.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 26 has been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 22 children for the morning session with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.