

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015FL054

**Name of Service:** Castlefield Montessori School

**Address of Service:** 59 Castlefield Woods, Clonsilla, Dublin 15.

**Eircode:** D15 YH36

**Name of Registered Provider:** Ellen Leahy

**Service type:** Sessional

**Date of Inspection:** 12/02/2026

**No of pre-school children:** AM 12

**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Early Years Inspectorate,  
Floor 7 Brunel Building,  
Heuston South Quarter,  
St John's Road West,  
Kilmainham,  
Dublin 8 | D08 X01F

**Inspection undertaken by:** E. Griffin

**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

Castlefield Montessori School is a privately run preschool service which operates from a two-story house in a residential area in North Dublin. The service is registered to cater for up to twenty-eight preschool children aged 2 to 6 years and to operate three sessions: two morning sessions from 9am to 12pm and 9:15am to 12:15pm and one afternoon session from 12:30pm to 3:30pm Monday to Friday. The service currently operates one morning session from the Montessori care room on the ground floor from 9am to 12:30pm and has twelve children registered. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme.

The Montessori care room is located on the ground floor with an adjoining kitchen/office and across the hallway there is sanitary accommodation for the children. On the first floor there is one care room and a sensory room which are no longer in operation. There is adult sanitary accommodation on the first floor of the service.

### Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs one adult who is employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM) to work daily in the service. On the morning of the inspection the registered provider and one adult employed were present and 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 and safety, and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(b), Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and Regulation 29 Premises.

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

12 February 2026

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider in relation to two significant concerns identified under Regulation 23, Safeguarding the Health, Welfare and Development of Child. A response which adequately mitigated the two concerns was received on the 13 February 2026. Further details are available under general safety and administration of medication section under Regulation 23.

## Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff member 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.

(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 named person to deputise as required.
  - (b) The person in charge and the deputy person in charge was rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
  - (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and staff reported being aware of this.
- (2) A review of paperwork and conversation with the registered provider confirmed there is currently one adult employed by the registered provider to work in the service. The file of the registered provider and one adult were reviewed as part of the inspection and the following checks were completed.

- (a) There was one written and validated references available from a past employer in relation to the one adult employed.
  - (b) There were three written and validated references available from a source other than a past employer in relation to the registered provider and one adult employed.
  - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and one adult. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
  - (d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (4) The registered provider and one adult both 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, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

### 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) There was an adequate number of adults working with the children. During the morning there were two adults caring for twelve children aged 3-6 years old.
- (3) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. Staff were aware of the required ratios for the age range of children.

### 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) The following practices were observed to be in place to support the children attending.

- A health promoting ethos in relation to eating healthy food was implemented. On the day of the inspection, children were observed to eat healthy snacks from home. Alternative snacks were available if required and drinking water was available. Staff reported how they shared information with parents in relation to the healthy food policy of the service.
- The presence of a visual daily routine on display provided the children with a sense of stability, security, and predictability. In addition, staff were observed to give children verbal reminders in advance of moving from one activity to the next activity. The transition from activity time to snack time was smooth and the children appeared familiar with this routine.
- The presence of a 'Birthday Wall' display, a 'Class Identity Wall' display and the children's artwork displayed throughout the care room supported the children's sense of identity within the service.
- A health promoting ethos in relation to supporting the children's emotional well-being was implemented. There was an 'Emotion Wall' which included an 'Emotion' poster and children's own photographs which were used to help support children's understanding of their emotions.
- There was a cosy area with a soft mat, cushions, cuddly toys and books available. This provided the children with a place to rest and relax throughout the morning. This area was observed to be used by the children during the inspection.
- Children's language development was observed to be supported through storytelling and staff engaging in conversations with the children throughout the inspection.
- The children were observed to play outdoors during the inspection. This supported their social, cognitive, and gross and fine motor development. In addition, part of the outdoor play area was sheltered. This provided children with shelter and protected them from harsh weather conditions such as rain and direct sunlight.
- At home time one adult was available to chat informally with parents at collection time while the other adult supervised the children in the care room.

## Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The Montessori room was bright and welcoming with plenty of natural light in the care room. The following equipment and materials were available to support the children’s learning and development.

- Child sized tables and chairs were available to the children, providing a comfortable area to eat snacks and take part in tabletop activities.
- Toys and materials were stored on low and accessible shelves and were visible and easily accessible enabling the children to independently access their choice of activity.
- The room was well laid out with designated areas of interest to provide for distinct types of play and learning. Areas included a library, arts and crafts area, practical life corner, a sensorial area, mathematics, language area, and cultural studies, keeping in line with the Montessori curriculum ethos. Each area was well equipped with equipment and materials that promoted fine motor skills, mathematical conceptual understanding, and language development. For example, staff showed the inspector various sorting, stacking, measuring and connecting equipment which is used to promote children’s understanding of shapes and sizes. In addition, there were real-life materials available.
- An outdoor play area was available for the children with a soft ground surface. Equipment and toys available included two playhouses and an outdoor play kitchen. Boxes with various outdoor materials and equipment were available.

### 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 the unannounced arrival at the service by the inspector, the entrance door leading into the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises throughout the inspection.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- Blind cords were secured and there were window restrictors in place.
- Toys and equipment used by the children were observed to be well maintained and in a good state of repair.
- Staff discussed how they check the children's snacks brought from home for any choking hazards such as full grapes.

##### Infection Control:

- Perishable snacks such as yoghurt and cheese brought by the children from home for morning snack time were observed to be stored in a fridge reducing the risk of bacteria multiplying.
- Children's water bottles were individually labelled.
- The sanitary accommodation was equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, and hand drying facilities.
- Foot operated pedal bins were observed to be used by children and staff for the appropriate disposal of waste in the care rooms and sanitary facilities.

##### Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection. The children's attendance book was monitored to ensure staff knew how many children were present in the care room and during outdoor play. This ensured a safe evacuation of the children in the event of an emergency evacuation.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. In the outdoor play area, there was a hole in the fence making this area unsafe and unsecure. This posed a significant risk if one of the children were to try to go out or put their hand through the hole into the back

garden of another home. This is an area that cannot be risk assessed. An immediate action notice was issued on the day of inspection. A response which adequately mitigated this concern was received on the 13 February 2026.

2. The drain cover was observed to be partially broken on the driveway entrance to the service. This posed a potential risk of injury.

### **Infection Control:**

3. Children were not observed to wash their hands before snack time and after outdoor play time. Staff were observed to administer hand sterilizer on the children's hands before snack time. This does not support adequate hygiene. Children should be facilitated to wash their hands under thermostatically controlled running water, with liquid soap and paper hand towels provided in line with HSPC guidance in relation to infection control protection measures.

### **Administration of Medication:**

4. There was a child aged between 3-5 years attending the preschool who had prescribed emergency medication in this school bag. There was a significant risk identified due to the following.
  - The serviced did not have a plan to identify triggers, symptoms or the steps to follow to safely administer medication and treatment if required.
  - The medication was stored loosely in the bag at an accessible level to other children.
  - The medication was out of date with an expiry date December 2025.

An immediate action notice was issued on the day of inspection. A response which adequately mitigated the concern was received on the 13 February 2026.

### **Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

#### **Corrective & Preventive Action**

##### **General Safety:**

1. The hole has been repaired on 12 February 2026. The registered provider has stated the hole will remain closed.
2. The drain cover was replaced on 12 February 2026. The registered provider has stated the drain cover will be checked on a regular basis.

##### **Infection Control:**

3. The children will wash their hands before lunch and after returning from the garden. The registered provider has stated the children will keep washing their hands at appropriate times.

### Administration of Medication:

4. The registered provider stated that the child's parents have confirmed that the child no longer requires emergency medication. The registered provider has stated they will ensure that children's medical information will be updated by the service and parents.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the hold closed.
2. Photographic evidence of the drain cover replaced.

#### Infection Control:

3. No supporting documentation submitted.

### Administration of Medication:

4. Documentary evidence that child does not require the prescribed emergency medication.

### Summary Comment

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

## 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)
- (a) The registered provider ensured that a record of fire drills which were evidenced to occur monthly in the service was maintained. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on the 26 January 2026.
  - (b) A record of servicing and maintenance for the firefighting equipment showed that the fire extinguishers were serviced on 16 May 2025.

(2) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All fire safety records requested by the inspection team were available for review.

(4) Notices detailing the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire emergency was on display in prominent positions at the premises.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b) Documentary evidence showed the smoke alarms had not been serviced since 24 October 2023. A similar non-compliance was observed on the last inspection 10 October 2023 which showed that the preventive actions provided by the registered provider has not been sustained.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

Smoke alarms and emergency lighting were checked on 18 February 2026. The registered provider has stated the smoke alarms will be checked on a regular basis.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence that the smoke alarms were serviced.

### Summary Comment

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

## Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

### Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (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

(c) The premises is adequately lit, heated and ventilated.

- Windows provide natural lighting to the care room. The natural light can be augmented with artificial ceiling lighting as required. Ceiling lights are fitted with protective covers and recessed into the ceiling.
- Heating is provided through thermostatically controlled wall mounted radiators.
- The care room had openable windows to allow for ventilation and the temperature of the room did not exceed the recommended ambient temperature of between 18-22°C.

- (d) The premises was observed to be clean and hygienic.
- (e) There were adequate and suitable sanitary facilities available for the proposed number of children. One toilet and one sink are required in sanitary accommodation for every 11 children.
- There are two toilets and two sinks located off the care room.
  - Separate adult sanitary accommodation is available on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the premises.