

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL093
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Name of Service:	Deerpark Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Deerpark Montessori School, St Mary's Parish Hall, Howth, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D13 V259
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Fitzsimons
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	25/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle
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
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Description of service

Deerpark Montessori school is a sessional early years' service which was established in 1997 by the registered provider. The service provides sessional preschool care and education to children aged 2 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9am to 12:30pm Monday to Thursday. The service has exclusive use of a community hall within a church building during the operational hours of the service. An outdoor area immediately adjacent to the hall is available to the children.

Staffing

The registered provider in addition to one other staff member work directly with the children. Two relief staff members are available in the service.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – record of pre-school child.

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, 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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

The files for 4 staff members including the registered provider and 2 relief staff members were reviewed.

(2) (a)&(b) Two validated written references were available for 4 staff members.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 4 staff members.

(d) International police vetting was available for one staff member who resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Three staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service each held appropriate childcare qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

There were 2 adults working directly with 15 children.

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) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 7 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1)(h) Details of children’s daily attendance including arrival and departure times were recorded in a attendance record book within the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) A record was not maintained in the service of the name, position, qualifications, and experience of the person in charge and employees in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)(a) CV’s have been obtained for the 2 members of permanent staff and the 2 substitute teachers and are now on file.

Preventive Action

(1)(a) CV’s will be obtained for any future employees in Deerpark Montessori and will be kept on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of curriculum vitae for 4 staff members received.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been reviewed and accepted.

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

Basic needs:

- Both Early year's practitioners were observed warmly engaging with the children throughout the inspection. The practitioners were very familiar with the children and their individual needs and were seen using warm vocal tones, positive language and positioning themselves at the children's level when engaging with them. The children were observed to be very comfortable in their environment and sought out the Early year's practitioners for support and guidance as they required it.
- The children brought their own morning snack with them from home. A calm social and relaxed atmosphere was created during snack time with the practitioners sitting chatting to the children. The children were encouraged to be independent with appropriate support provided as required.
- The children were accompanied to the sanitary facilities in the adjoining corridor by one of the early year's practitioners when they needed to use the sanitary facilities.
- The children's choice was facilitated in the service. This was evident during circle time when one child chose not to participate and was supported to engage in an alternative play activity of choice.
- The practitioners were observed to be calm and responsive with the children and used a combination of distraction techniques and negotiation to address minor issues that arose.

Supporting relationships:

- The early years practitioners were observed interacting with the children in a warm and caring manner. Informal conversation was used as a means of engaging children with an activity with practitioners using open ended questioning techniques. The practitioners praised children for their behaviours especially when they were helpful to others, taking turns and sharing resources. The service operates a key work system whereby practitioners record observations on children to provide feedback to parents and to plan for the individual learning needs of the children.

- The children’s artwork and photographs were on display in the care room, which support children’s wellbeing by feeling valued and appreciated.
- The practitioners were observed taking the opportunities to interact with parents at collection time and update them on their children’s day in the service.

Physical and material environment:

- In the care room resources were easily available and accessible on low level shelving. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The indoor environment was bright airy and welcoming for the children. The room was equipped with specialised Montessori materials including sensorial, practical life, numeracy, cultural and literacy resources all of which were readily accessible to the children. The children were observed to choose the materials that they wanted to play with and were well supported in extending their play experiences by the practitioners.
- An extensive range of books located alongside the rest area in the service were available for the children to use.
- An outdoor play area immediately outside the service was available to the children. An extensive grassed area provided the children with the opportunity for free movement and running. A range of resources were stored in a secure shed including a slide, 2 football goal posts with footballs, transport toys, small rockers, a basketball hoop, hula hoops and frisbees. All of the children present on inspection enjoyed time in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. The children’s water bottles were stored in their bags or in the corridor outside the care room and were not available to the children throughout the session.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Basic needs:

1. The children’s water bottles are now kept on a tray in the classroom each morning so the children can access them when they wish throughout the day.

Preventive Action

1. Each child will put their bottle on the drinks tray at the door of the classroom when they arrive to school each day as part of their daily routine. This will ensure that all children have access to a drink of water as they need it.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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 doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The entrance gates to the service were secured when the children when playing in the outdoor play area.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available at all the sinks throughout the service. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play and outdoor play.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- A care plan and prescription were available in the service for a child who may require emergency medication while attending the service.

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 in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection in respect of the manager and deputy manager, both of whom work in the service on a daily basis.
- (2)(a) and (b) The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The children attending the service were observed to be supervised at all times whilst they were in the care room and in the outdoor play area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

- An insurance certificate confirming insurance for 22 children attending the service at any one time on a sessional basis up until 27/11/2024 was available.