

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL144		
Name of Service:	Linda's Creche & Montessori School		
Address of Service:	St. Joseph's, Beaverstown Road, Donabate, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K36 PX40		
Name of Registered Provider:	Linda Behan		
Service type:	Full Day, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	16/09/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM 19
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 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		

Description of service

Linda's Creche & Montessori School is a family-run early years service, operated by the registered provider and two close family members and a team of staff, conducted from a purpose-built premises adjoining the registered provider's and co-owner's family home. The service accommodates pre-school children from 1-6 years of age on a full day care and sessional basis. School aged children up to 12 years of age are also catered for in the service. The service operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm daily. Eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) from 9.00am to 12.00 midday Monday to Friday.

Staffing

The registered provider and a team of 8 staff members provide direct care to pre-school children attending the service. An additional staff member is allocated to care for school aged children in the service. All staff who provide direct care to pre-school children hold a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, 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, 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 manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

The files for 9 staff members including the registered provider were reviewed.

(2) (a)&(b) Two validated written references were available for the 9 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 9 staff members whose files were reviewed.

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 1 staff member who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 8 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service including the registered provider held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent. The remaining staff member did not hold a recognised childcare qualification; however, the person in charge confirmed that this staff member works directly with school age children only.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

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 ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced in the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Wobbler room there were 4 children aged 1 year to 1 year 5 months attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Toddler room there were 4 children aged between 2-year 1 month and 2 year 3 months, all attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Montessori room downstairs, there were 9 children aged between 3 years and 5 years attending on either a full day care or sessional basis, being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Montessori room upstairs, there were 8 children aged between 3 years and 5 years attending on either a full day care or sessional basis, being cared for by 1 staff member being cared for by 1 staff member.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

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:

- Throughout the inspection staff members were observed to be kind and caring in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences.
- Mealtimes in the service were observed to be a social occasion for the children.

The service provides breakfast to children as needed and dinner with children bringing their own morning and afternoon snack with them to the service. Throughout the service the staff members engaged the children in conversation whilst they ate providing assistance to them as needed.

- The children's personal care needs were promptly attended to. Nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required. The staff members used the opportunity to engage with and chat to the children. The children who were toilet trained used the toilet independently with discreet supervision. When going to the garden, staff ensured the children were appropriately dressed and applied sun cream to the children.
- The staff member in the Wobbler room informed the inspector that the children's sleep needs are generally met in line with their home routine. On the day of inspection, the children attending the Wobbler room, and the Toddler room were placed to sleep in cots in the sleep room or cots in the larger sleep room or on sleep mats on the larger sleep room floor after they had their dinner.
- Children's photographs, drawings of family and artwork were displayed throughout the care room, this supports children to feel safe a sense of belonging in their learning environment.
- The staff members supported the children's behaviour in a positive manner, promptly re-directing and distracting the children at the earliest signs of conflict whilst showing respect for the children involved.

Supporting relationships around children:

- There was friendly and warm atmosphere in the service throughout the day. It was evident that the children and staff had developed close relationships as they spoke together about interesting activities and recent events.
- Staff members communicated with parents and guardians on a daily basis, both informally during drop off and collection, staff members completed a daily record of the children's feeding, sleeping, nappy changes and activities throughout the day which was shared with the parents / guardians.
- Throughout the care rooms the staff members were observed to work well together as a team, the staff members supported each other in the care of the children modelling positive ways of interacting with the children and one another.

Physical and material environment:

- Throughout the care rooms the play materials and equipment were displayed and readily accessible on low level shelving to promote the children's choice and independence when selecting their play activities.

The children in the care rooms demonstrated familiarity with their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.

- In all the care rooms areas of interest were developed including well-resourced home areas with play crockery, cooking utensils, dress up materials, hair care resources, dolls and baby care items, all of which encouraged and enabled the children’s imaginary play experiences. Additionally, construction resources, transport toys, arts and crafts materials and a range of tabletop resources including jigsaws were available. In both the Downstairs Montessori room and the Upstairs Montessori room a wide range of Montessori play resources were available to the children.
- An enclosed outdoor play area was located to the side and rear of the service with 3 distinct areas established each of which were covered with impact-absorbent material A range of play materials was provided to support the children to engage in movement and active play outdoors, including a selection of ride on toys, fixed spring rocking toys, slides, a plastic climbing frame, plastic playhouses, tables and seating. An additional outdoor area ‘Linda’s Montessori Garden’ is directly accessible from the outdoor area, a large sand pit, a water wall and raised beds were available for the children in this area.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and material environment:

- Opportunities for sensory play were not provided in either the Wobbler room or Toddler room or in the specific outdoor play areas used by the children attending these 2 care rooms.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Physical and material environment:

- Registered Provider has introduced new sensory materials to the Wobbler and Toddler room. This equipment is easily accessible to the children and can be used at any time of the day.

Preventive Action

- Each month manager will assess the room and check that there is ample and diverse equipment to enhance the Childs holistic development. Staff will discuss equipment for each room at their monthly staff meetings.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of play materials.

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 internal and external doors were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The staircase was adequately lit, in good condition and suitable handrails were provided.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Play materials and equipment provided in the care room and garden were observed to be in good condition.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- Children's food and snacks from home were stored in a refrigerator located in the care rooms.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were gently reminded, and assisted, when necessary, to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies which reduced the risk of cross-infection.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition and documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having or requiring medication on the day.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks including the children's colour, position and breathing were conducted on all sleeping children in the service and recorded in the service.
- All children aged less than 2 years slept in a standard cot on the day of inspection.
- A staff member was present in the sleep room at all times when children were sleeping on floor mats.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A Garda vetting disclosure that was available for 2 staff members was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The wooden covering on the radiator cover in the Toddler room was damaged which posed a splinter risk to the children in attendance.

Infection Control:

3. There was no system in place in the service for the hygienic storage of children's soothers which were stored uncovered in children's individual boxes.
4. The nappy changing mat was torn with the foam exposed which was an infection control hazard as the mat could not be cleaned effectively.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Registered provider immediately applied for updated Garda vetting for both members of staff and they have the disclosures on each staff members files.
2. The broken wooden panel has been replaced.

Infection Control:

3. All soothers are now placed in each Childs individual "soother Box" and placed in their own "Blanky Box" (individual box).
4. Immediately the nappy changing mat was replaced.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Registered provider has done a list of each staff member and when their Garda vetting renewal due date is. This is placed in a prominent position in the office.
2. Any broken material like this will be documented and signed by a staff member and management and a timeline of 24 max will be given to get it repaired (Broken equipment Form) When it is fixed both parties will sign off on the work.

Infection Control:

3. Each Child has an individual blanket box and, in this box, contains their bed sheet, blanket, comforter/ teddy, soothers etc. The individual soother box will now become part of this blanket box routine.
4. This has been added to the daily checklist.

Supporting documentation submitted

Updated Garda vetting disclosure.

Photographs of repairs completed to radiator cover.

Photograph of individual soother storage boxes.

New nappy changing mat.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present in electronic tablet devices provided in each care room, noting each child's arrival and departure time on a daily basis.

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival to the service on the day of inspection the inspector was requested to record their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

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 certification provided for inspection.
- (2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

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 firefighting 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 record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place in August 2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 19/12/2023 and the smoke detection system on 05/06/2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate the service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate a maximum of 50 children attending on a full day care basis, with an expiry date 27/03/2025.