

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL162		
Name of Service:	Little Cherubs Montessori		
Address of Service:	69 Craoibhin Park, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K32 Y544		
Name of Registered Provider:	Susan O'Connor		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	13/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	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 Cherubs Montessori is a privately owned sessional early years service. The service caters for up to 11 children aged 2 years 8 months to 6 years who are eligible to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The service operates from 9.30am to 12.30pm from Monday to Friday for 38 weeks each year. Little Cherubs Montessori is conducted from one care room and sanitary accommodation which adjoins the registered provider's family home. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service on a daily basis. Additionally, a staff member is currently employed in the service in a post which is funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. There were two adults present on the day of the inspection including the registered provider and an educator working directly with the children. The file for a relief staff member was reviewed on the day. This staff member provides cover when needed, however was not present 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, safety and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(4) Management and Recruitment.

Regulation 11 (1)(3) Staffing Levels.

Regulation 15 (1) (a-i) (3) (c) Record of a Pre-school Child.

Regulation 19 (1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of the Child.

Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of Child.

Regulation 25 (1) (2) (a) (b) First Aid.

Regulation 26 (1)(a)(b) (4) Fire Safety Measures.

Regulation 28 Insurance.

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, 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 a named person to deputise as needed.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09:45am and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(c) The service had a clear management structure in place with clear roles and responsibilities outlined.

(2) The files of the registered provider and two staff members were reviewed. The file for an external contractor present on the day was also reviewed. The following was recorded:

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

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

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff, the registered provider and for the three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to show that the registered provider and two adults who 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, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

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 two adults, including the registered provider and a staff member working with 10 children aged 3 years to 4 years and 6 months on the morning of the inspection.

There was an external contractor present on the day facilitating a workshop with the children in a supernumerary capacity.

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) to (i)

On review of the documentation relating to eleven children's files within the service, the required information and detail was available and completed for each of the eleven files reviewed.

(3) The children's records were available and open for review by the inspector as an authorised person.

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) Each child's learning and development and wellbeing was facilitated within the preschool in the following ways:

Basic needs:

- Children's snack and water bottles were brought from home. Snack consisted of cheese or ham sandwiches, rolls, crackers, yoghurts and fruit including blueberries, strawberries, mandarins, bananas and grapes. Children's water bottles were accessible to the children during the morning session.
- There was a cosy area, the 'Reading Corner', observed in the service for the children to relax in as required. The cosy area was equipped with a sofa, chair, cushions and a selection of books for reading and relaxation.
- Children's independence was supported. Throughout the session, children were given responsibilities such as tidying up and giving out plates at snack time. Children were encouraged to use the toilet and wash their hands independently.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children and children were given praise and encouragement. Children were offered comfort and support when needed. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service.
- Staff were observed interacting with children at their level and engaging in children's play at table top time, during floor play and at outdoor play.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there was a 'Family Tree' with photographs of children's families displayed at the children's level. Children's names and photographs were on their coat hooks.

- The service used an electronic application to communicate and share information on the children with parents.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; children were given five-minute verbal cues to support them with the transitions. Children were involved in transitions such as setting the timer for five minutes to tidy up time and singing songs. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.

Programme of Activities:

- Children’s learning and development is documented in children’s learning journals. These include photographs of children engaged in learning experiences and children’s drawings.
- Adults facilitated a circle time, doing a roll call in Irish and singing songs about St. Valentine’s Day.
- An external contractor visits the service regularly to facilitate a music and movement group session with the children. This visitor came to the service on the day of the inspection. This music and movement session included dancing and singing and movement to music using a parachute and scarfs. This promoted gross motor development and fundamental movement skills.

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

- There was comfortable furniture with small child sized chairs and tables for children to sit whilst they played or for mealtimes.
- There was a variety of play based materials available that were suitable to the age and stage of children’s development to include the following: There was a kitchen to support dramatic and pretend play for children. There were art materials such as chalk, chalk boards, paper, stencils and crayons to support creative art and mark making for children. There was a cosy area for children to relax and a variety of books to provide opportunities for storytelling. There were Montessori materials such as wooden cylinders and tabletop materials such as jigsaws, plastic building bricks and matching games. There were transportation toys to include cars, trains, wooden train tracks and small world toys including a house with people, wild animals and dinosaurs.

- An outdoor play area was available for children. The equipment and materials included a playhouse, wooden kitchen, water wall, benches, ride on cars, a large chalk board and chalk, a sandpit with buckets and spades, a large tuft tray with playdough and rolling pins, two long ramps with transportation and wheeled toys and small world toys including dinosaurs.

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:

- Entry to the service was managed by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of the children.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed and secured and was mainly surfaced with artificial grass in addition to paved footpaths.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid hand soap and dispensed handtowels were available in the sanitary facilities.
- Children were observed washing their hands before snack time.
- Children snacks which were brought from home, were refrigerated to prevent spoiling of perishable items.
- Pedal bins were available for disposal of waste and contaminated items.

Administration of Medication:

- There were health care plans available and displayed in the service for children who required them.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of emergency evacuation.
- There was a fire drill procedure displayed in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Fire Safety:

- The details of the attendance of the children were not accurately recorded in the attendance book. A child who was present on the day was not recorded as present for the duration of the time they attended. Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children in an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire Safety:

Corrective Actions:

- The registered provider reported that children's first day or short day transitions before staying for a full day will be recorded.

Preventive Actions:

- The registered provider reported that all children present on any given day for no matter how long their time in and out will be recorded on the service's attendance book.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 23 has 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. It is acknowledged that a staff member also held current paediatric first aid training.

(2)(a) An adequately stocked first aid box was observed in the care room 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 31 January 2025.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available. Firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were last serviced on 19 September 2024.
 - (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the service.

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 11 children for the morning session with an expiry date of 27 March 2025.