

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL167			
Name of Service:	Little Footsteps Creche and Montessori			
Address of Service:	32 Brookdale Road, Swords, Co. Dublin			
Eircode:	K67 R672			
Name of Registered Provider:	Joan O'Sullivan			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	01/05/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	25
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 Footsteps Crèche and Montessori is situated in a residential area and provides a sessional, part-time and full day care service to children from 0 to 6 years. The service operates from 07:45am to 5.45pm and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The premises consists of 3 care rooms, the Wobbler and Toddler room on the ground floor with the Montessori room on the first floor, kitchen, office and sanitary facilities. Outdoor spaces were located to the front and rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager and 6 staff members who work directly with the children. A cover staff member provides relief cover in the service when needed. A chef was engaged in cooking and catering duties. The registered provider was not present in the service 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 the 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 Wobbler Room, Toddler Room and 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 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 manager was the designated person in charge of the service and was the named person to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09:15am.

(2) The files for 8 adults employed in the service were reviewed. In addition Garda Vetting disclosures for the registered provider and the adult present assisting in catering duties were also reviewed.

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

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

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and 9 adults. 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 3 adults who had lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 8 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 Minister.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) International police vetting was not available for 1 adult who had lived outside of the state for a period of more than 6 months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

2 (d)

Corrective Action:

The registered provider stated that this non-compliance has been passed to the new registered provider to follow up on.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the action submitted. The registered provider was unable to address the non-compliance as the service changed ownership following the inspection. The non-compliance under Regulation 9 has not been met and remains outstanding. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 at 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 to 2 years being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Toddler Room there were 11 children aged 2 to 3 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

- In the Montessori Room there were 14 children aged 3 to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members including 1 staff member employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times. This was confirmed by the staff roster and sign in records.

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)

Basic needs:

- Children's meals were sourced from an external company and were reheated and served by the chef. On the day of the inspection the children had pasta, tuna and sweetcorn and curry. Snack was provided by the service. Staff discussed that alternative food options are available for children with additional dietary requirements or preferences. Children were provided with drinks of water during outdoor play.
- The children's personal care needs were attended to promptly. Nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as needed. The staff members used the opportunity to engage with and chat to the children. The children who were toilet trained used the toilet independently. Children's faces were wiped and noses cleaned.
- Children from the wobbler room and toddler room slept on mattresses in the wobbler room. There is a separate cot room consisting of two cots for children under two years of age. Children slept when they were tired and at scheduled sleep times.
- Children attending the service were given the opportunity to spend time in the outdoor area during the inspection.

Supporting relationships

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service.

- Transitions were observed to be well managed. Daily routine was displayed on the wall in the rooms and the routine was reflected in practice. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.
- Staff were observed interacting at children's level and supported children's play.

Physical and material environment:

- The furniture provided in the care rooms were low level and appropriate to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care rooms.
- The care rooms were divided into different areas of interest which provided opportunities for a variety of spontaneous play experiences and choice for children. In the Wobbler Room there were mats, soft toys and blocks for floor play and soft steps to provide physical play opportunities for children. In the Toddler Room and Montessori room there were home corner areas including wooden kitchen, dolls, buggies, dress up unit, puppet theatre and a play kitchen activity centre in the wobbler room all of which supported the children's imaginary play experiences. A variety of small world play materials such as dinosaurs, wild animals and farm animals and transportation toys including wooden trains and train tracks supported children's imaginative and dramatic play experiences. Construction areas included plastic building bricks and wooden blocks, and tabletop materials such as jigsaws and Montessori materials supported early numeracy learning opportunities. Art and crafts materials including an art easel, pencils, stencils and pages provided mark making opportunities and creativity for children. Books supported children's early literacy and language development. There were natural, real-life and open-ended materials such as a sensory fabric box, sticks, wooden toys and silver orbs in the wobbler room and in the Montessori room real-life items such as a hairdryer, colander and milk cartons provided opportunities for exploratory and open-ended play.
- There were two outdoor play areas which provided opportunities for outdoor play. In the front outdoor play area children were engaged in construction with plastic building bricks, water play at the tuff tray using items such as plastic bowls and funnels. There was a small table and bench for children to carry out tabletop activities. A fully enclosed outdoor area divided into two areas is located to the rear of the service. In the large outdoor play area which was covered mainly with an impact absorbing surface. There was a large wooden slide with climbing frame and house, small plastic slide, plastic tunnel, see-saw, ride on cars which promoted gross motor and fundamental movement skills. In addition, there were large plastic blocks, transportation toys, playhouse, kitchen, blackboard, sink and large wooden covered area for children to play in adverse weather. In the smaller area, which was surfaced with bark there was a

mud table, water tray, tuff tray, areas for digging and materials such as buckets, spades and watering cans.

Programme of Activities and its Implementation:

- Children’s learning and development is documented through observations and learning stories of the children which were displayed in the Montessori room. Staff discussed that children’s learning and development is documented in children’s learning journals which include children’s artwork, photographs of special occasions and ‘well’ moments. The curriculum is also informed through conversations with children about their interests. Staff discussed that the service also implements a Montessori curriculum.
- Identity and belonging were promoted throughout the service. For example, children's photographs were displayed in frames on the wall and there was a ‘Family Wall’ display with photographs of children’s families displayed in each of the rooms. There were cubbies for children to store their belongings in the hallway and in the Montessori room.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and material environment:

1. There was no designated area for rest and relaxation in the Toddler room or Montessori room for the children to freely access throughout the day as required for children’s rest and relaxation.
2. The books in the Toddler room were placed on bookshelves that were out of the children’s reach. This did not enable children to freely choose a book.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective action:

1. Cushions that were in the staff room have been put into rest areas in the Toddler room and Montessori room.
2. The books in the Toddler room have been distributed between the high shelf, which the staff use for story time, and a low window shelf for the children to choose as they wish.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 19 have been addressed.

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.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of the children.
- The outdoor play areas were fully enclosed.
- Children wore sunhats for sun protection when playing outdoors.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water and liquid hand soap were available in the sanitary facilities.
- Nappy changing facilities were available for the children and nappy changing was completed for the children, at set times or when required.
- Pedal operated bins were available for waste and disposal of contaminated items.
- Children were observed washing hands before mealtimes, and after use of the toilet.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep plan documentation was available to demonstrate that a full sleep plan review had been completed by staff for two children under the age of two and that parents had been fully included in this decision.

Fire Safety:

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

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for the registered provider and nine adults. However, three vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Corrective action

1. The registered provider reported that renewal of Garda vetting will no longer be required for 1 adult as they will no longer be working in the service. The registered provider reported that renewal of Garda vetting for 2 adults has been passed on to the new registered provider to follow up on.

Preventive action

1. The service was in the process of changing ownership.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the action submitted. The registered provider was unable to address the non-compliance as the service changed ownership following the inspection. The non-compliance under Regulation 23 has not been met and remains outstanding. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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. There were 2 staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR), including the manager, both of whom were present on the day of the inspection. It is acknowledged that 2 staff members also held current paediatric first aid training, both of whom were present on the day of the inspection.

(2)(a) Adequately stocked first aid kits were observed in the hallway, kitchen and Montessori room of the service.

(b) First aid boxes were 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)(a) A monthly record of fire drills was available on the premises.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record for firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on 20 August 2024 and fire detection system was serviced on the 17 August 2024.
- (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout 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 33 children for a full day care service with an expiry date of 27 March 2026.