

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL214				
Name of Service:	Mini Trinity Montessori				
Address of Service:	45 Holywell Green, Feltrim Road, Swords, Co. Dublin				
Eircode:	K67 TX62				
Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle Keegan				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	22/06/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>14</td> <td>PM</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </table>	AM	14	PM	10
AM	14	PM	10		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.				
Inspection undertaken by:	S Taaffe and AM Coyle				
Title:	Early Years Inspectors				

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

Mini Trinity Montessori is a privately owned early years service which is registered to accommodate a maximum of 15 pre-school children aged 2 to 6 years on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis. The service is also registered to accommodate school aged children up to 12 years of age. The service operates from 8.15am to 6.00pm each weekday and facilitates eligible children to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 8.45 – 11.45am daily. Mini Trinity Montessori is conducted from the ground floor of the registered provider’s family home, an end-of-terrace house situated in a large housing estate in Swords in north Co. Dublin. There are two rooms in operation in the service, the Montessori room which is located on the ground floor of the family home and the Playschool room which is the larger of two wooden cabins in place in the outdoor play area located to the rear of the premises. The Playschool room is used for sleep, for the storage of additional play materials and to facilitate play experiences for small groups of children. The separate smaller cabin provided in the outdoor area is used as an office and staff room.

Staffing

The registered provider oversees the day to day operation of the service on a full-time basis and employs four staff members to work directly with the pre-school children in the service, one of whom is currently on statutory leave until the end of the year. Another staff member is employed in a part-time capacity to prepare meals and work with the school age children each day. Periodically students are facilitated on work experience placements in the service, working under supervision in a supernumerary capacity with the pre-school 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/ safety. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 24. 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 inspectors wish 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 and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

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

(2)(a) and (b) Two written references were available for the registered provider and two written, validated references were available for the 5 staff members employed in the service.

(a) Ten written references were from past employers.

(b) Two written references were from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider, the 5 staff members and for a college student who was present in the service on the day of inspection.

(d) International police vetting was available for each of the 5 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Two of the four staff members who work directly with pre-school children in the service held appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) and (b) There were no written, validated references available for review for the student who was present on a work experience placement in the service during the inspection.

(4) Two of the four staff members who work directly with the pre-school children, both of whom were present on the day of inspection, did not have certification to confirm that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum of Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or that their qualifications had been deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action

(2)(a)(b) Two written references in respect of previous employers were validated by the owner in charge of the service on 23/06/2023 and these were submitted to the Inspectorate on the same date.

(4) A letter of qualification recognition for one staff member was received via email from the DCEDIY Early Years qualifications department on 29/06/2023 and this was submitted to the Inspectorate on the same date. The qualifications for both staff members were on the published list of approved Early Years Qualifications and are automatically approved.

Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) All staff files have been checked to ensure that validated references, Garda vetting and police clearance where applicable are held on file in respect of all adults working in the service. Staff files will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that all necessary documents as required are held on file.

(4) The relevant page of the published list of approved Early Years Qualifications has been printed and kept on file with a copy of the staff member's award for future inspections. All qualifications will be confirmed on the title recognition checklist before a staff member commences employment in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- Two written, validated references for the student who was present in the service on the day of inspection.
- Confirmation that the two relevant staff members held appropriate qualifications to meet the regulatory requirement in respect of Regulation 9(4).

Summary Comment

The registered provider has demonstrated that the non-compliances identified under Regulation 9(2)(a)(b) and (4) have been adequately addressed.

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 were 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 throughout the inspection.

There were 14 pre-school children (of whom 1 child was aged 2 years 10 months and the remaining 13 children were aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 10 months) being cared for by 3 staff members on the morning of the inspection. Four of the 14 children were attending the service on a sessional basis. In addition, a college student was present in the service on the day of inspection, being facilitated to work under supervision in a supernumerary capacity, as part of a work experience placement whilst undertaking a Level 6 childcare training course.

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

The following examples demonstrate how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- The staff members were respectful in their interactions with the children in their care. The children were praised for their involvement in activities and on completion of tasks.
- The children's independence was encouraged. For example, children who were able fed themselves, used the toilet independently, and some children put on and took off their own clothing. The child who was not yet toilet trained had their nappy changed as often as was required. Staff members pre-empted children's difficulties and were on hand if a child needed assistance.
- If required, breakfast cereal was available for the children until 9.00am. The children brought their own snacks with them to the service including sandwiches, a variety of fruit and yogurts. The registered provider sourced dinner provisions in bulk from a catering company and these were stored frozen on the premises. A delivery docket dated 19/06/2023 was available showing that the service received a range of foods from the company which included fish fingers, sausages, chicken bites, crispy potato cubes, twisty fries, white rice, vegetable curry, vegetarian pasta gratin and mashed potatoes. On the day of inspection a choice of either chicken bites or sausages was served for dinner with curly fries and cooked frozen vegetables. Wraps and butter were planned to be served for tea later in the afternoon. In discussion with the inspectors, the registered provider confirmed that the service menu was under review with plans in place to reduce the amount of processed foods provided. This will be reviewed on the next inspection. The registered provider supplied a fruit bowl with bananas and apples which were accessible to the children during the inspection. The children's water bottles were accessible to the children during the day and these were placed beside the children on their tables when eating. The children were given sufficient time to relax and enjoy their meals.

- No child slept during the inspection. When required, pre-school children are facilitated to sleep on sleep mats set up in the Playschool room. One child who seemed tired for a short period after dinner was encouraged to rest and relax on the couch in the ECCE room until the child was soon ready to resume activity.
- Prompt attention and care was provided to the children whose clothes were wet following water play. The children's clothes were changed swiftly, placed in bags and sent home at collection time.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The children were observed to seek out staff members for assistance and comfort which was readily provided by the staff members. The staff members approached children's behaviour in a positive and supportive manner, calmly distracting or re-directing the children before conflict escalated and encouraging the children to share and take turns to good effect.
- The inspectors observed that children's transitions were supported. Visual and verbal strategies were used by the staff members to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities and movement. The children were observed engaging in activities using equipment and play materials of their own choice.
- The children participated in a pre-planned water activity outside on the warm, sunny day of the inspection which involved the children getting changed into appropriate clothing and sun hats, splashing and spraying with water guns and throwing water balloons and buckets of water at each other and at the staff members. The children and the staff members participated in this activity with great enthusiasm and there were many moments of fun and laughter observed.
- For children who required additional supports the inspectors found there to be up-to-date care plans in place which referenced the children's interests and preferences.

Physical and material environment:

- In both the Montessori room and the Playschool room the play materials and equipment were stored on low-level shelving to facilitate the children to select and replace items of interest independently. Jigsaws and manipulative toys, specialist Montessori equipment, small world toys including vehicles, animals, people and figurines, and art and crafts materials were included amongst the play materials provided.
- Interest areas were established including home areas, construction zones, arts and crafts areas and reading/relaxation areas. In the Montessori room an office area had been established beside the home corner, based on the children's emergent interests.

- A suitable range of age-appropriate books were available for pre-school children in the service.
- The fully enclosed outdoor play area was located to the rear of the premises, surfaced mainly with artificial grass. Impact-absorbent surfacing was in place on the steps and at the entrance leading into the Playschool room. Play equipment provided in the outdoor play area included a wooden climbing frame with standing platform and slide attached, a free-standing slide, a plastic playhouse, self-propel cars and a water wall with slanted plastic guttering.

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 and side gate 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.
- Pre-school children are accommodated in the Montessori room which occupies designated space to the rear part of the registered provider's family kitchen/living room on the ground floor of the premises. The kitchen cupboards, electrical equipment and oven located to the front of this room were made inaccessible to children through the layout of the furniture and shelving units.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play and outdoor play.
- One child wore a nappy on the day of inspection and disposable aprons and suitable disposable gloves were available to be worn during nappy changing procedures.

- There was a documented process in place for the cleaning of toys and equipment and up to date cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- A refrigerator was available to store lunch boxes provided by the parents for the children's snacks. This reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- No child slept or showed signs of tiredness during the inspection. Based on an examination of the service's previously completed sleep logs it was evident that sleep checks were conducted at 10 minute intervals noting the colour, position and breathing pattern of each child.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A yellow plastic rocking toy in the outdoor play area was cracked and broken in a number of places. This posed a risk that the children's fingers could become entrapped in the sharp-edged gaps.

Infection Control:

2. The nappy changing mat was torn at the seam leaving foam exposed which was an infection control hazard as the mat could not be thoroughly cleaned.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been carried out:

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. The rocking toy has been disposed of on 23/06/2023.

Infection Control:

2. The nappy changing mat has been disposed of on 30/06/2023. A new mat was purchased, and a photo was sent to the Inspectorate on 14/08/2023.

Preventive Action

All outdoor and indoor equipment will be monitored daily and any signs of wear and tear or breakage will either be repaired or disposed of with immediate effect.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- Photograph of a new nappy changing mat in its original packaging.

Summary Comment

The corrective actions and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 23.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. As required, all 14 children who were already present in the service when the inspectors arrived had been entered in the attendance register, noting their specific times of arrival. During the inspection the children's departure times were recorded contemporaneously by the staff members in the attendance register when they were collected by their parents or guardians.