

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL273
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Name of Service:	Smarty Pants Montessori Naíonra & Afterschool
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Address of Service:	St Catherine's National School, Rush, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K56 TY32
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle Hartin
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	08/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	7
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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
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Description of service

Smarty Pants Montessori, Naíonra and Afterschool is a privately owned sessional service located in a modular building in the grounds of St Catherine's national school in Rush, Co Dublin. There are 2 care rooms in the service the Montessori room and the Naíonra room which supports and encourages the children in the use of the Irish language. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 38 weeks of the year from 8:45am to 11:45am with 2 rooms in operation and from 12:30pm to 3:30 pm with one room in operation The service also provides a service to school aged children.

Staffing

There were 6 adults working directly with the children on the day of inspection including the registered provider. A student on work experience placement was present 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 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.

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 and there was a named person appointed to deputise as required.

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

On the day of inspection, a total of 7 staff files, including the registered providers file, 5 staff members and the student on work experience placement were reviewed.

(2)(a) & (b) Written references were available for all staff members and the registered provider of which, the 5 staff members references were validated.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 7 adults whose files were reviewed. The service 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 1 adult who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 6 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) & (b) Two validated written references were not available for the student who was present in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a) & (b) Student file is now updated with two validated written references. Referee no. 1 was contacted on the 9/10/24 and reference was validated on same date. Referee no.2 was contacted on the 11/10/24 and reference was validated on the same date.

Preventive Action

Manager has updated the Student Policies and Procedures and have gone through this with all staff to make sure everybody is on the same page. Policy and Procedure has been signed off by all staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two written validated references were provided. Reviewed and updated Student policy & procedure, signed by staff were provided.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been reviewed and accepted.

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.

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

- In the Montessori room there were 17 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 8 months being cared for by 3 adults. A staff member was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the Naíonra room there were 19 children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years 6 months being cared for by 3 adults. A staff member was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

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

Basic needs:

- The 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 morning snack with them from home. The early years practitioners sat with the children while they ate chatting with the children and thus creating a calm and social atmosphere.

- The sanitary accommodation was located adjacent to both care rooms, the children were observed to use the bathroom independently with support provided as the children required it. As needed the children were gently prompted to wash their hands.
- The children's choice was facilitated in the service. This was observed throughout the inspection as children were supported to follow their play interests with the practitioners assisting the children to locate and set up their chosen play materials. Children appeared comfortable and confident to make choices about their learning, and the practitioners were responsive to children's ideas and requests.
- The children had access to comfortable rest areas in both care rooms where the children could choose to enjoy a rest as they desired.
- The early year practitioners supported the children's development of social skills by guiding them in times of minor conflict to listen to each other and to think of solutions together. Appropriate language and tone of voice was used by the adults during these interactions.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The early Years practitioners were observed to interact with children in a nurturing, sensitive and warm manner. The practitioners demonstrated their familiarity with the children by talking to the inspector about their observations of the children, interests, personalities and the children's developmental stages.
- The children appeared to feel safe, comfortable, and familiar with the practitioners and within the environment. This was evident as children called the adults by name, invited them to play, approached them with ease and enjoyed being around them. The children navigated their learning environments freely in the knowledge that their choices and interests would be supported.
- The service operates a key worker system whereby practitioners record observations on children and use these to inform their feedback to parents and plan for the children's learning and development in the service. The services communicate with parents via a mobile app in addition to providing updates to parents on a daily basis at drop off and collection.

Physical and material environment:

- The indoor environment in both care rooms were bright and visually appealing. The children's artwork was displayed on the walls, this supports children's wellbeing by feeling valued and appreciated. A family wall and birthday wall were positioned at the children's eye level in both care rooms which enabled the children to bridge the connection between the service and home.

- Both care rooms had a range of play based materials and equipment which offered opportunities for stimulation, exploration and imagination. These were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which encouraged the children's independence and facilitated the children to select toys and activities of their choice.
- The care rooms were spacious which enabled the children to move around freely and the two care rooms were set up in clearly defined interest areas which were equipped with a broad range of developmentally appropriate play materials to support children's play and learning. The interest areas included home corners containing a range of resources for the children to extend their play including utensils and appliances in addition to dress up materials all of which facilitated the children's imaginary play experiences. Construction areas, transport toys, art resources and a broad range of tabletop materials were also available. Sensory play was facilitated in the care rooms and in the area immediately adjacent to both care rooms beneath rigid plastic roofing sand and water tables were provided for the children.
- A range of books were provided in both of the care rooms to support the children's language development.
- An outdoor area was available to the children immediately outside the service. A well-resourced mud kitchen was provided along with a large wooden boat that the children could climb into, a wooden teepee, a see saw in addition to a range of ride on and push along toys. Two separate additional areas were also available, the 'forest' which was a more natural area and provided the children with the opportunity for exploration and adventure along with a grassed area at the front of the primary school adjacent to the gate where the children were collected. A slide was available in this area along with plenty of space provided for running and free movement.

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 to both care rooms were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.

Infection Control:

- Refrigerators were available in the care rooms and these were used to store the children's snacks provided from home, which reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and following messy play and outdoor play. There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the service.
- The equipment, play materials and facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- No child attending the service required any medication to be administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exits were clearly signposted and were unobstructed.

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 on a software App on electronic tablet devices in each care room, noting each child's arrival and departure times.

(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. Visitor's attendance at the service was recorded on a software App.

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 and 2 staff members held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training which easily ensured that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on the premises and were available for the children in attendance, in the event of an emergency.

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 all fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated and staff members reported that fire drills were carried out monthly.

(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 the 03/09/2024 and the smoke detection system on 27/02/2024.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were on display in the care rooms and hallway of the service.