

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL297
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Name of Service:	The Bandroom Montessori
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Address of Service:	Sea Road, Yellow Walls, Malahide, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K36 RT22
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Gouldsbury
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	0
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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:	S. Taaffe
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

The Bandroom Montessori was established by the registered provider in 2012, operating as a privately-owned sessional early years service which participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00midday each weekday for 38 weeks each year. There is an option provided for the children to avail of an extra 30 minutes in the service for an additional fee from 12.00midday. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 22 pre-school children aged 2 – 6 years. School aged children are not accommodated in the service. The Bandroom Montessori is conducted from one main room and a smaller library space provided a single-story premises which was for many years used by a local pipe band as a practice hall and which now is solely used to accommodate the early years service. Sanitary facilities for children and for staff, and a kitchen are also provided in the premises. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the side of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider and 2 core staff members work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis while a third core staff member is currently on extended statutory leave.

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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 – record in relation to pre-school service.

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,*

(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 inspector arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The records maintained for the registered provider and the 3 core staff members employed in the service were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and 2 written, validated references available for the 3 staff members. Six references were provided by past employers and 2 references were provided by sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and the 3 staff members. The Garda vetting records 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 2 adults who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) The registered provider and the 3 staff members all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service for the duration of the inspection with 3 staff members working directly with the 19 pre-school children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years 5 months who were present during the morning session.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(a) Photographs of the registered provider and each staff member were on display in the entrance hallway, accompanied by their name, position and qualifications. Further details including each staff member's experience and training records were maintained within the staff files on the premises and these were presented for review by the inspector.

(b) - (f) The information specified in sub-sections (b) to (f) in this regulation were on display on a notice board in the entrance hallway.

(g) A record in writing was maintained of policies and procedures required in accordance with Regulation 10. These were provided in hard copy on the premises and were also available in electronic format. Relevant policies were cited in the parent handbook provided to parents on enrolment, including reference to the service's enrolment policy; settling in policy; attendance, arrival and collection policy; comments and complaints policy; supporting positive behaviour policy; child protection policy; healthy eating policy; medication administration policy; data protection policy, and withdrawal from the service policy.

- (h) Details of children’s attendance including their arrival and departure times were maintained electronically in the service on a daily basis.
- (i) An up-to-date weekly staff roster was available in the service.
- (j) The service had a medication administration record book available for use should a child require medication to be administered at the service.
- (k) A record was maintained of accidents, injuries and incidents involving children during their attendance in the service, as evidenced in the 10 records sampled by the inspector. These records related to incidents that occurred from 19/09/2022 to 29/08/2024 and all were found to be clear and legible, and included parental signatures to document that they had been informed and were aware of the relevant incidents that had occurred.

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 of the service.

Basic needs:

- There was a warm and child-centred atmosphere in the service. The registered provider and 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. The adults spoke positively and warmly to and about the children during the inspection.
- Healthy snacks and drinks were provided by the parents for the children for their morning snack. These included sandwiches, crackers, yogurts, fruit, carrot sticks, cheese and water. The adults sat with the children at snack time, encouraging conversations and extending interactions in a friendly manner. Drinking water was freely available to the children at snack time and throughout the session.
- The adults were observed to be responsive to the children’s cues, should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision and assistance provided when required.

- Children were facilitated to rest on couches, soft matting and cushions in the enclosed library area and on a couch in the main pre-school room if they wished to rest or relax during the session.
- All children engaged in outdoor play on the day of inspection, dressed appropriately for the cool weather conditions that prevailed. The children were also facilitated to engage in physical activity indoors during the session, including Irish dancing and participation in action and movement songs.

Supporting relationships:

- The registered provider and staff members were observed to be warm and caring in their interactions with the children. The adults demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's needs (both individual needs and, for some children, their additional needs), thereby fostering each child's inclusion and involvement in activities, based on the children's preferences and interests.
- The registered provider and staff members demonstrated skilful interaction strategies to support the children's learning and development including occasions when the adults were observed following the children's interests in their chosen activities and acting as their play partners which the children seemed to enjoy.
- The adults appeared to work well as a team as they communicated with one another throughout the session regarding children's needs, upcoming activities and materials needed. The adults engaged with parents, grandparents and childminders in a friendly and familiar way when they arrived to collect the children at the end of the session.
- The registered provider and staff members were heard gently encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted interactions based on respect and partnership.

Physical and material environment:

- The pre-school room was well resourced with a wide range of Montessori equipment provided on open fronted low-level shelving which were organised to be visible and easily accessible to the children, thereby facilitating child-led play.
- The room was laid out in a variety of interest areas including sensorial, numeracy, language, cultural and practical life areas with a home area provided containing wooden kitchen units equipped with materials including delph plates, ladles, stainless steel cutlery, pots and pans, and real-life appliances and packaging, and a shop area with counter, canopy, stocked shelves and shopping baskets.

- A broad range of books were available in the library area which supported children’s language development.
- Wall space was used to display samples of the children’s curricular-themed art work, including the solar system, autumn scenes and Halloween.
- The enclosed outdoor play area was situated to the side of the premises and was predominantly surfaced in impact-absorbent material. A domed metal climbing frame, a low-level plastic climbing frame, a wooden playhouse, three plastic playhouses and ride-on toys were included in the play materials and equipment provided to support the children’s play experiences. In addition, swings and a wooden climbing frame with an attached slide were positioned on a section covered with a heavy layer of bark.

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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered providers and staff members to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service:

General Safety:

- The entrance door leading in to the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and for the duration of the inspection.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed by fencing, hedging and securely latched gates.
- The water temperature in the sanitary accommodation in the service did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels provided for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service. The children in the service were encouraged by the adults to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and after outdoor and messy play.

- A refrigerator was available and used to store lunch boxes provided by the parents for the children's snacks. This reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition and documented cleaning schedules were maintained in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- A child-specific care plan was available for a child attending the service to authorise staff members to administer prescribed medication in the event that the child would require it when present in the service.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Outings:

- The registered provider stated that the service did not conduct outings.

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 electronically entered as present on the mobile tablet device used to record attendance, 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. A visitor's log was available and the inspector recorded her attendance on the premises and the purpose of the 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times when the service was in operation.
- (2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes provided in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on the premises and these 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 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on 17/09/2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises, both of which were certified as having been serviced on 09/08/2024.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 22 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis. The policy was valid from 28/03/2024 to 27/03/2025.