

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015FL312

Name of Service: The Stables Montessori

Address of Service: 8 The Stables, Strand Road, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin

Eircode: D13 CP78

Name of Registered Provider: Claire Doughan

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 22/10/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	0

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
Inspection undertaken by:	Á Dunne
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

The Stables Montessori is a sessional service operating in Portmarnock, County Dublin. It consists of two care rooms, one on the ground floor and one on the first floor of the premises. The service is registered to provide care to children age 2 to 6 years from 9am to 12.30pm and from 12.45 pm to 4.15pm Monday to Friday, although the afternoon service is currently not in operation.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs two childcare staff. On day of inspection, registered provider, and two childcare staff members were present. The registered provider's business partner is currently on statutory leave but ordinarily also works 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record of a Preschool Child, Regulation 16 - Record in relation to a Preschool Service. Regulation 11 Staffing levels was assessed across all rooms. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the two rooms of the service - The Downstairs room and the Upstairs 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.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action notice was issued to the service on the 22 October 2025 in relation to the Regulation 25- First aid.

On the 23 October 2025 the registered provider responded to the immediate action notice outlining the measures implemented within the service to mitigate the risk. Please see details in the body of the inspection report.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy person in charge, 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
- (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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that-

- (a) the service had 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 was being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person was on the premises.

(c) there was clear management structure in the service that identified the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2) The file of one new childcare staff and only the garda vetting for the RP and one childcare staff were reviewed.

(a) One written and validated reference was available from a past employer for one adult.

(b) One written and validated reference was available from a source other than past employer, for one adult.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as police vetting was not required for one adult as they had not lived outside of the State for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Documentation was not available to demonstrate that one adult, who worked directly with children attending 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.

(7)(a)

1. There was no documentation available to show that the registered provider had ensured that staff members were provided with relevant information and training when commencing employment in the service in relation to the service's policies and procedures. The registered provider confirmed that records of new staff members' induction into the service were not maintained and that staff members were not provided with ongoing formal supervision in order to support them in their work practices.

This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4) The staff member is no longer employed in the Preschool and is now employed as Afterschool Staff and a new staff member has been employed.

(7)(a) The registered providers are setting out a staff training policy and induction plan for all new staff members taken on in the future, they are also ensuring that all staff avail of as much further training within and outside of the service as possible.

Supporting documentation submitted

(4) Copy of Qualification of New staff member.

(7)(a) None

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions proposed and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9, has been adequately addressed.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place for the service and available for 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.

(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 inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the early years' service.

(3) The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection.

- In the Downstairs Room there were 8 children aged 2 years 6 months to 3 years 6 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

- In the Upstairs Room there were 8 children aged 3 years – 5 years being cared for by 1 staff member.

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.*

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
1. No written record was available for 1 child attending the service and the following information, was not available:
 - (a) name and date of birth of the child.
 - (b) date on which the child first attended the service.
 - (d) address of a parent or guardian of the child.
 - (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 and

2. For a sample of 12 registration forms reviewed, the records available were not complete and did not have the following details available, as follows :

(b) date on which the child first attended the service was missing on 11 forms.

(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 was missing on 1 form

(g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was missing on 1 form;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency was missing on 1 form.

This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The Registration form was completed and is on the premises with all details included.
2. Registration forms have been completed.

Registration forms will be checked regularly and updated when required

Supporting documentation submitted

1. 2. Copies of completed Registration forms

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 15, has been adequately addressed.

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:

(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;

Compliance Information

- (1) (i) An up-to-date weekly staff roster was available in the premises and staff sign in records were maintained by staff.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (j) Medication administration forms were not maintained in respect of medication administered to a child in the service on a daily basis for 38 medicine administrations completed since 1 September 2025. This practice was inadequate as written records did not have a second staff member signature to demonstrate that the procedure had been checked and undertaken by 2 staff members for the 38 administrations of the daily medicine. This is at variance with the service's medication administration policy which stated *"Administration of medication will be done in the presence of a witness, who will co-sign the medication administration record..."* This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (j) The child's medication records now signed and witnessed by second staff member daily. Strict policy in place regarding administration of the medicine. Staff training has been given, and one member is responsible daily.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(j) Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16, has been adequately addressed.

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:

- The inspector observed that the children's learning, development, and well-being was supported by the staff and the environments in both the Downstairs and Upstairs rooms.
- The children brought their own lunches from home consisting of cold meat sandwiches, crackers, cheese, vegetables, fruit and yogurts. Lunchtime at 10.45am was observed as a relaxed and sociable event with children given time to sit at low tables appropriate to their ages. The children's water bottles were available for the children to drink.
- Children were facilitated to use the sanitary facilities independently, with assistance and supervision provided by staff if required.
- The children were observed to have freedom of movement during indoor play with a variety of opportunities of play developing their motor skills.

Supporting Relationships:

- The inspector observed the staff interacting with the children, engaging positively, and supporting them with their care, work, and play. Language development was supported by the adults through conversation and singing songs.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The materials and equipment provided to the children in the rooms were suitable to the age and stage of development of the children present. Children had the freedom to choose from materials and equipment available to them.
- Child sized furniture supported children's independence.
- Play dough was provided to facilitate sensorial play in the two care rooms during the inspection.
- Children's artwork was on display, providing a sense of identity and belonging to the children.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

1. The children did not experience outdoor play during the inspection. The registered provider confirmed that there is no outdoor play area for this service.

Physical and Material Environment:

2. No cosy area present in the Upstairs Room, to offer a quiet comfortable area for children to rest and relax during the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The service is now taking the children out to the nearby green and on nature walks. Weather permitted, small groups are taken out at different stages to ensure safety and that ratios are met at all times.
2. A cosy area of a soft mat and cushions has been put in place in the Upstairs room.

Supporting documentation submitted

2. Photographic Evidence

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19, has been adequately 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, the entrance door of the service was secure to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises throughout the inspection.
- Attendance records were present, completed with times of arrival and departure for each day and were accurate.

- Medication was observed to be stored in the low-level locked fridge in the Downstairs Room ensuring no access to a prescribed medication.
- The play equipment and materials observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.
- A suitable handrail was fitted on the carpeted stairs which reduced the risk of children falling when making their way to and from the Upstairs Room.
- The temperature of the two care rooms was within the recommended ambient temperature of 18 - 22 °C.

Infection Control:

- The children were encouraged by staff members to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.
- Soap was available to the children for washing hands.

Administration of Medication:

- A care plan for one child with signed parental consent for administration of regular daily medicine was available.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. There was evidence of poor infection control measures observed during the inspection as follows:
 - There were inadequate facilities for hand drying, for example, paper towels from a dispensary were not provided in the sanitary accommodation for the children or in the separate staff toilet area. A communal roll of paper towel was provided outside the sanitary accommodation off the Upstairs Room, and this was observed being used by children when drying their hands after hand washing. The handling and sharing of a communal roll of paper increases the likelihood of cross contamination.
 - Perishable food items such as cold meats, cheese and yogurts, brought from home, consumed by the children were not refrigerated on arrival to the service. This increased the risk of bacteria multiplying in the perishable food items. This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.
 - The chosen disposal bins in use throughout the service required repeated hand contact with swing lid of the disposal unit, as they were not pedal operated.
2. Thermostatically controlled warm water was not available for hand washing at the wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation beside the Downstairs Room. The water in both the hot tap and the cold tap was

cold and recorded a temperature of 15° C at 11.00am. This does not aid effective hand washing. This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.

Fire Safety:

3. Monthly fire drills were not carried out in the service, for December 2024, March 2025 and May 2025.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. Disposable hand towels are now readily available for the children to take themselves.
All perishable foods are stored in the fridge going forward.
New pedal bins are now in place in the service. These practices will be adhered to and staff have been instructed.
2. The temperature of the water is now at the correct temperature. Staff will check temperature on a daily basis to ensure it is ok for the children and the staff.

Fire Safety:

3. Staff will ensure no fire drills are missed and they will be held monthly going forward

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. None
2. None

Fire Safety:

3. None

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23, has been adequately addressed but will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 in attendance records, noting each child's arrival and departure times.

Non-Compliance Information

(3)(a)(b) A system was not in place to record a visitor's attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit. The inspector was not requested to record their attendance in the premises and the registered provider could not provide maintained records of authorised visitors facilitated to enter the service. This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(3)(a)(b) The visitor sign in was mislaid on the day of inspection, a new one is in place now. All visitors must sign in and out and staff have been made aware of this requirement

Supporting documentation submitted

(3)(a)(b) Photographic Evidence

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 24, has been adequately 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

- (2) (a) (b) First aid boxes were stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the service and in the event of an emergency and were available to the adults responsible for the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) There was no person trained with valid in date first aid response training or with in date paediatric first aid immediately available to the children. A staff member qualified in first aid for children must be available to the children at all times. An immediate action notice was issued on the 22 October 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) First Aid Responder training has been booked for three staff to be completed on 18 to 20 November 2025 and the remaining staff will complete first aid training after this training was completed. This should not have been the case and due to staff shortage, it has been difficult and will not happen again. Due to staff illness, the First Aid Responder (FAR) Training was postponed to 13 January 2026, however a staff member with in date FAR Training has agreed to be on the premises until the FAR Training is complete.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) Evidence of Booking FAR training

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25, has been adequately addressed.

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 written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 23 September 2025.
- (b) A record was available of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting and for the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced 10 September 2025.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were displayed in a conspicuous position in the service

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection the inspector observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance. The registered provider was available in a supernumerary capacity to open the service front door and to provide assistance to the staff member in the Upstairs room for example, bringing lunch bags upstairs at lunch time and bringing children downstairs at collection time.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c) The mechanical ventilation unit was observed to not be operating in the children's sanitary accommodation adjoining the Downstairs Room on the day of the inspection. The vents placed in the windows of the care room were not adequate ventilation for the sanitary facility. This non-compliance was found on the last inspection in September 2024 and the corrective action as not been sustained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) The registered providers have had experts come in to see if they can do anything re ventilation without touching the external walls of the building. As the building is old, this has always been an issue but they will endeavour to try and rectify the issue permanently once a correct action is found and the landlord is agreeable. However, as an action the registered providers will ensure that the window near the bathroom is opened to ventilate the area at all times and they will keep the classroom windows open when further ventilation is necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

(c) None

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29, has been adequately addressed but will be reviewed on next inspection.