

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY002				
Name of Service:	Little Learner's Montessori School				
Address of Service:	Garryard, Killimor, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.				
Eircode:	H53 AH02				
Name of Registered Provider:	Ann Fahy				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	03/05/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>15</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	15	PM	N/A
AM	15	PM	N/A		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	TUSLA - Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.				
Inspection undertaken by:	H. Heagney				
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

This privately operated pre-school is in a detached building in a housing development in the village of Killimor, Co. Galway. The pre-school offers an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and sessional care pre-school programmes, from Monday to Friday. The pre-school caters for children aged between 3 to 6 years. The service caters for a maximum number of 22 pre-school children, at any one time. There is a playroom, office, and sanitary areas. A quiet rest area is provided in the playroom, to facilitate a child to rest or opt out of an activity if he/she chooses to. There are secure outdoor play areas to rear of the premises for children to have fresh air and a range of play experiences. A child centred play-based pre-school curriculum focusing on emerging interests and an enquiry-based programme with elements of Montessori is provided.

Staffing

There is a person in charge and a named deputy person in charge. The two staff including the registered provider, hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 7, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education.

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, and facilities. The inspections 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 member 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) There was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.
- (b) The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.
- (c) Staff rosters and documentary evidence indicated that there was a clear management structure in the service, that identified the lines of authority and accountability within the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2)(a)(b)(c)&(d)

Since the last inspection, on the 21st of October 2021, no new staff had commenced working in the service.

- (4) The two staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 7, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the two staff.

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)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.
- On the day of the inspection, there were 15 pre-school children aged between 3 to 6 years. There were two staff working directly with the pre-school children.
- (8)(c) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises while the pre-school was operating.

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.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)&(i)

A sample of thirteen children's records were reviewed by the Early Years Inspector.

The entries reviewed were factual, consistent, and accurate.

The thirteen random children's records contained the following:

- The name and date of birth of the child.
- The date on which the child first attended the service.
- The date on which the child stopped attending the service (where relevant).
- The name and address of the child's parent or guardian, and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
- Written authorisation / permissions for collecting the child.
- Details are recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
- The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
- A record of any immunisations the child has had.
- Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical treatment if there was / is an emergency.

(4)&(5)

The registered provider charge advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that all relevant children's records were kept for 2 years from the date a child stops attending 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.

Compliance Information

- The staff encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
 - At 11.20hrs, the children had their snacks provided by parents and guardians. They were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The staff complied with the service's healthy eating policy.
 - The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development. The staff laid the tables out with cloths and flowers prior to the children's snack time.
 - The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting.
 - The children had the opportunity to rest or relax in a designated cosy area.
 - Children have plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging. The children had opportunities to move about freely and explore the indoor and outdoor environment. The children were observed at free play, playing house / kitchen, rolling and filling cake tins with playdough, at story / circle time. The children were observed stacking, drawing, at mix and match, constructing, shape sorting, connecting, and playing with animals / dinosaurs. The children played with sand, linking magnets, and filling a shopping trolley. The children were observed feeding and dressing dolls and playing with transport vehicles. The children played a group game, cheering each other, catching a ball under a cone, after a staff member launched it from an elevated track. The children chatted to the inspector about why they liked pre-school, and about the Killimor hurling team. The staff read stories and children questioned the characters and gave their views. The staff used visual aids and probed with questions such as 'who is this?', 'how many are there?', and 'where is that?'.
- In the outdoor area the children were observed running, chasing, riding on tractors, playing with tracks, at sand play, brushing, at chalk play, car cleaning and block building. The children made a bridge of blocks and took turns balancing on same. The children posed for various group photographs for their profile scrapbooks.

- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by -
 - having a key person system for each child,
 - having a daily child be team leader,
 - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
 - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language,
 - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact,
 - providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
 - providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks,
 - working with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child’s interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns.
- Parents/guardians signed a parental agreement form and received a parent handbook with the service ethos, daily routines, strategies for supporting the children and the updated policies, procedures, response plans.
- On speaking with the registered provider, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child’s experiences in the pre-school including the child’s likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times and via text messages, by phone calls, and by email.
- The staff created individual learning journals / profile scrapbooks for each child, showing photographs of the child engaged in activities and their art craft work, paintings, and drawings.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child’s activities and initiating games and activities. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences. The inspector noted the staff acknowledged a child’s achievements ‘that is great’ ‘well done’ and used questions such as ‘what should we do next?’, ‘is there any other way to do this?’, to allow children to critically think and explore.
- On the day of the inspection the staff showed kindness. They were thoughtful, supportive, and reassuring whilst caring for the children. They cared for children by being supportive while the children engaged in free play, role play, and creative play. A climate was fostered where the children knew their boundaries.

The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe, and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The design, organisation and resourcing of the environment supported each child's wellbeing, learning and development, within the ethos and philosophy of the service. The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried. The play materials and environment were changeable, flexible, and responsive to the emerging changing needs, preferences, and interests of the children. The staff encouraged children to interact and to engage with a range of materials, activities, and equipment in the environment, based on the child's choices, age and stage of development.

The Playroom

- The indoor playroom was laid out to provide a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative, and enriching experiences for the children. The playroom was designed and arranged to
 - maintain a space that was clean, organised, and free of clutter,
 - accommodate children individually, and in small groups,
 - divide the space into areas that were supplied with materials organised in a way to support children’s play and learning,
 - give all children access to the same facilities, activities and play opportunities, to promote their welfare and development.
 - The equipment was stored on low-level shelving and was readily accessible by the pre-school children.
 - The play equipment and materials were designed to offer a child manipulative activity, to encourage hand eye co-ordination, to develop fine motor skills and logical thinking.
 - Materials and items included a dress up clothing on a rail, connectors, suckers, towers, links, shape sorters, stacking /hammering items, pegs, pins, rods, puzzles, and insets. There was a shop, with containers, bowls, packages, and a shopping trolley. There was a kitchen with toaster, pots, pans, and food items. There were transport vehicles including boats, cars, trucks, tractors, and cars. There were garages and tracks. There were animals, little ponies, dolls, highchairs, cots, and a castle. There was a construction table with tools. There was a sand unit with buckets, shovels, racks, and utensils. There was a water tray with utensils. There was a house with small world items. There were sandpaper numbers / letters, books, massage brushes, flowers, ribbons, and a robot. There was art and craft items including trays, paints, glue, pens, pencils, glitter, paper, playdough, scissors, rolling pins and shape cutters.
 - Displayed on the walls were posters, visual aids, photographs, artwork, and themes including hello in various languages, a map of Ireland, the weather, emotions, good manners, our daily routine, sea animals, animals, fruits, vegetables, birthdays, and Winnie the pooh. There was also a clock and a mirror.
- (1)(b) Rest / quiet area was provided in the playroom in the form of child size seating, foam matting and poof discs to facilitate a child to rest or opt out of an activity if he or she chose to.
- (3)(a) Outdoor area
- The outdoor environment was laid out to accommodate the learning and developmental needs of the children. The outdoor area was surrounded by fencing and gates. The area was covered with grass, tarmacadam, impact absorbing matting and concrete surfaces. There were storage boxes with toys and wooden blocks / planks. There was mushroom seating and a table. There were picnic tables, bench

seating, cones, wooden pieces, sand basins with toys and utensils, wheelbarrows, tractors, planters, watering cans, garden gnomes, brushes, and chalk. There was a stage corner, playhouses, rockers, slides, and a butterfly house.

- There was an all-weathered sheltered area with a dolls house, a construction table with tools, tables, chairs, a kitchen with utensils, tracks, and transport vehicles. There was a sand unit with buckets, watering cans, containers, and brushes.
- Displayed on the walls were painted flowers, ribbons, bunting, ladybird, and bee decorations.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious, and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- There was a healthy eating policy. The registered provider advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids, and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- At 11.20hrs, the children had their snacks provided by parents and guardians which included raisins, cheese, meat slices, crackers, rice cakes, sandwiches, vegetables / fruit pieces and yogurts.
- Cutlery and plates were offered for children’s snack times.
- Clean and safe drinking water was at a low-level and accessible to children in the playroom.
- There was a designated fridge, for the safe storage of perishable foodstuffs from children’s lunch boxes, for their snack times.

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 premises was secured to prevent unauthorised entry.
- The external play area was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- Blind cords were secured by fasteners.
- Visibility strips were on glass doors as a safety precaution.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Daily records of attendance were kept for all of children attending the playroom.
- Staff advised of documented risk assessments for the indoor and outdoor play areas.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and disposable paper hand towels.
- Children were observed washing their hands after toileting, after messy play, outdoor play and prior to their snacks.
- Tabletops and work surfaces were cleaned with disposal paper towels and disinfectant spray.
- The playroom was kept adequately ventilated with the windows and doors left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playroom.
- Waste was disposed of in foot pedalled lidded bins.

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 service provided evidence that two staff were trained in first aid for children and available to the children, attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in conspicuous position.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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 monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 24th of April 2023.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 4th of October 2022.
- The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 3rd of May 2023.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance specifying the address of the service, catering for 22 children at any one time, with an expiry date of 27th of November 2023, was available. The insurance covered -

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- against fire and theft,
- buildings,
- outings undertaken as part of the service provision.