

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY142
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Name of Service:	Little Munchkins Montessori
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Address of Service:	Sylane National School, Sylane, Tuam, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H54 DA29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona Lardner
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	No.
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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:	F Kelly.
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).

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Description of service

The service is in a classroom in Sylane national school, located 5 kilometres from Tuam, Co. Galway. The service operated a sessional service for pre-school children aged between 3 and 6 years of age. It can cater for a maximum number of 22 preschool children from 09.00 to 12:15, Monday to Friday. There was one playroom and both children's and adult's sanitary facilities. The service had access to an outdoor area at the rear of the school.

Staffing

There were two adults working in the service which included the register provider on the day of inspection. The adults working directly with the children in the service had completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 to level 7 in Early Childhood 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, 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

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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 wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises.*

(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 and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the registered provider was the person in charge and was on the premises and facilitated the inspection.

Following a review of the service files and discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that there were three staff members working in the service, which included the registered provider and two childcare staff. These recruitment files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

- (2) (a) Of the six references required, five references were sourced from past employers and were validated.
- (b) The remaining one required validated reference was from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for three staff. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

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- (d) Police vetting disclosure was not required as the adults working in the service had not lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over six months.
- (4) All adults working directly with children have obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education from Level 5 to a Level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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 period of inspection there were adequate numbers of adults working with the pre-school children attending the service.
- (3) At 10.15 am on the day of inspection, the following playroom was in operation.
- Playroom 1- there were 2 adults working with 9 preschool children.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

- The staff introduced to the theme of the week which was "Friendship Week". Each child had the opportunity to give their views on what it takes to be a good friend. The staff encouraged each child to give their opinion on what it takes to be a friend.
- The children were independent with their toileting needs, however, on occasion children needed a reminder from staff.
- Children were observed washing their hands prior to lunchtime and after using the toilet. The children did not need a prompt to wash their hands prior to lunch time; they automatically stood in line used a low-level sink that was conveniently adjacent to the playroom. The children used warm water, liquid soap and used paper towels to dry their hands, which was disposed of in a foot pedal operated waste bin.
- Lunchtime was observed to be a social event; the children ate their snacks in the low-level tables and chairs. The staff sat with the children and ate their own lunch, speaking and interacting in a positive manner with the children.
- The children got an opportunity to pick where they could sit at snack time and they also to pick what colour plate they chose to use at snack time. Two children were appointed leaders for the day and were responsible for various tasks including handing out the coloured plates.
- The children were not rushed when they were having their snack. When they were finished, the children were observed tidying up their lunch bags and return their belongings to their shelf on a storage unit.
- The staff members supported children's transitions within the service in a positive and sensitive manner. The staff spoke to the children and let them know what activity was next.
- Children had the opportunity to move freely around the play area during the period of the inspection. The children had an opportunity to play in the outdoor area each day, there was a sheltered area where the children could play even in bad weather.

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- The children got involved in a science experiment, where they put flowers into small containers of coloured water and the coloured water altered the colour of the flower petals. The children were able to watch the progress of the experiment throughout the session as they were left on a shelf with the reach of the children.
- The play area was divided into defined areas offering different experiences for the children. The playrooms were bright and well laid out with a variety of distinct interest areas. Wall spaces were effectively used to display photographs of the children and their families, art works and posters relating to the current curricular plan.

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 ensured that persons were trained in first aid and were immediately available to the preschool children attending the service. There were two adults trained in First Aid Responder available to the children.
- (2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available to the children, the contents were checked on a regular basis.
- (b) The first aid box was stored in the cupboard in the indoor playrooms.

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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) Each child attending the service was checked in and out by a staff member. A record of each child's attendance detailing the arrival and departure time of each child was maintained daily. This record was available for inspection.

(3)(a)

A register of people entering the premises other than those outlined above in (3) (a) was available for inspection.

The following information was recorded for each person as outlined above.

- The date
- The person's name, and contact details
- The reason for entry

(b) A daily register of visitors to the service was maintained.