

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY153
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Name of Service:	Little Wonders Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Dunmore Road, Tuam, Co. Galway.
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Eircode:	H54 YA02
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Name of Registered Provider:	Vanessa Cotter
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child and Family Agency, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
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Inspection undertaken by:	F. Kelly.
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Title:	Early Years Inspector.
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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 sessional service was located on the outskirts of Tuam, Co Galway. It consisted of 1 playroom attached to a residential house. It had a large outdoor play area toward the side and rear of the building. The service caters for a maximum of 16 children aged between 2 and 6 years of age. The session operates from 09:00 to 12:00, Monday to Friday.

Staffing

There are 2 staff members working in the service which included the registered provider.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform

decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

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

(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 inspections, the registered provider was in charge and facilitated the inspection.

Following a review of the service files and discussion with the deputy manager, it was confirmed that there were 2 staff employed in the service, which included the registered provider who works in the service on a daily basis. These files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

(2)(a) The required 4 written and appropriately validated references available were from the adult's most recent employer.

(b) Not applicable, as all written validated reference were from previous employers.

- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the staff working in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting for staff members every 3 years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required as the adults working in the service had not lived for a period longer than 6 consecutive months outside the jurisdiction.
- (4) All adults working directly with children have obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education ranging from level 5 to level 8 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 10.30 am on the day of inspection, the following adult to child ratio was in operation.
There were 2 adults caring for 15 children.

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

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The children were appointed different jobs throughout the week. A list of each child's name was displayed on a sheet with the days of the week. A movable arrow indicated what day of the week it was and who was the helper for that day. Children were observed going to this list throughout the session, checking and looking at this list. One child was observed looking for their own name and asking how many days before it was their turn. On the day 3 children helped hand out the lunch bags. They were observed bringing a trolley of the bags into the room and handing out the bags to each child.
- The staff members respected the values and families of all backgrounds; it was acknowledged that children of different nationalities were attending the service and the registered provider had displayed flags of the different counties and incorporated family photographs to enhance the children's ability to settle into the service.
- Children had an opportunity to play outdoors during the session. The children were picked up from the outdoor area by their parents at the end of the session. Staff were heard giving feedback to the parents during this time.
- The adults present were supportive and caring in their approach to the children. Children were listened to and communicated with on an ongoing basis and regularly praised for their efforts. One example was when a younger child needed assistance putting on their jacket. The staff member let the child do as much as they could and only gave assistance when needed. The child was praised for what they did on their own and only provided the minimum help when needed.
- The staff dealt with a minor upset at snack time when one child had an issue with the contents of their lunch box. The staff spoke and interacted with the child in a sensitive manner but also gave the children a few minutes so that they could accept the situation. Within a few minutes the situation had been resolved and the child was seen happily eating and talking to the rest of the children at the lunch table.

- The curriculum plan for the first 2 weeks of term, (the “Settling in Period”) covered themes such as How do I Feel, Opening and Closing Lunch Boxes, signing in and out each day and Talking about our Family Photographs. Children were also asked to name their favourite songs to sing and their favourite stories and how important it is to listen to your friends. This transition of children into the service helped make it as easy and comfortable as possible for the children.

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 requirement has been met. The registered provider had evidence that 1 staff member had current paediatric First Aid Responder training completed.
- (2)(a) The registered provider had ensured that the service was equipped with first aid boxes.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to children when required.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1) Adequate floor space was provided in the playroom for the free movement of children to play and explore. The overall floor measurement of this space was 31.5 m².
- (3) The registered provider of this sessional service had allowed for a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space for each child attending the service.