

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK048
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Name of Service:	Lisdowney Montessori Play & Learn
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Address of Service:	Resource Centre, Lisdowney, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 WNF4
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Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Coogan
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	09/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	15
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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

Lisdowney Montessori Play and Learn is a registered part-time service which operates from the community hall in the village of Lisdowney in north county Kilkenny. The service provides a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service between the hours of 08:30 to 12:00 hours and an extended part-time service until 13:30 hours, catering for children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is comprised of a large main classroom and two smaller classrooms. There is a kitchenette area adjacent to the main classroom and a hard surface play area to the outside of the building. Directly across the road the service has sole use of an enclosed spacious green outdoor play area which was donated to the service.

Staffing

There were four staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. A designated relief cleaner was also employed. All four staff who as part of their role in the service work directly with the pre-school children, held qualifications in ECCE ranging from Level 5 to Level 7 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework. The registered provider also held a Level 6 QQI qualification in Leadership for Inclusion in early years.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 9- Management and Recruitment,

Regulation 10-Policies, Procedures etc. of a Pre-school service,

Regulation 11-Staffing Levels,

Regulation 15-Record of a Pre-school Child,

Regulation 21-Equipment and Materials,

Regulation 23-Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 24-Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance,

Regulation 25-First Aid,

Regulation 26-Fire Safety Measures,

Regulation 28-Insurance.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included all three classrooms.

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 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 named deputy designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The staff roster demonstrated that the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation.

- (c) A clear outline of the management structure was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall of the service, identifying the roles and responsibilities of each individual employed in the service.
- (2) Staff files for five staff members were reviewed by the inspector.
- (a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the staff members from either a past employer or from a reputable source.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for five staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) Not applicable as there was no staff member employed in the service who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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

On review of the service's policies the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that all required documents specified in Schedule 5, were available in the service and were communicated to the staff as part of their induction process on commencing employment in the service, with annual reviews and revisions taking place as appropriate.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(4)(a) There were 3 adults working directly with the 24 pre-school children in attendance for the ECCE session on the day of inspection. The inspector observed that the children and staff would participate in activities and snack times together in the large classroom and at various times break into smaller group activities between the three classrooms while continuing to always ensure that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained.

(4)(b) From 12:30 to 13:30 hours, 15 pre-school children remained for the part-time service, directly supervised by the 3 staff members.

(8) In discussion with the staff and on review of the staff roster, the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises while the pre-school children were in attendance.

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

It is acknowledged that of a sample of ten records of a pre-school child, reviewed by the inspector, elements (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (i) were recorded. However, the inspector observed that element (b), the commencement date of the child in the service was not recorded and element (h)-the immunisation status of each of four children was not detailed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response.

Corrective and Preventive Action

All child records have been updated, with the commencement date recorded for each child.

The Manager will take responsibility for ensuring that all children's commencement dates are updated when they start at the service.

The staff team has been informed of this action.

The Manager has updated the enrolment form to include a tick-box section indicating whether a child is vaccinated.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of record of preschool children’s commencement dates.

Copy of revised registration record template.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

There was appropriate furniture, play equipment and materials provided for the children in each of the three classrooms appropriate to their age and needs.

The main classroom contained a kitchen/ home area, role play area, construction area, rest and reading area, dolls houses, appropriate child sized sixed tables and chairs, numerous play resources and materials such as jigsaws, pegboards, manipulative and connective materials, various types of blocks and dress up materials.

Non-Compliance Information

While it is acknowledged that there was suitable furniture, play equipment and materials in the service, there was more than what was required to provide a quality play environment for the children.

It was difficult to identify the interest areas in the large classroom as play equipment and shelves of toys fully lined the walls of the classroom, with no clear arrangement system. Children were observed to wander from one resource to the next with no area providing a clear purpose. Dolls houses sat side by side with construction equipment and the art area was inaccessible due to shelving in front of it. Similarly, the children’s beautifully designed family wall was blocked by more shelving preventing them from accessing it to view it. It is acknowledged that in discussion with the staff present, that a lot of donations are made to the service in good faith, which leads to the accumulation of excessive play materials and resources.

The registered provider has submitted the following response.

Corrective and Preventive Action

The staff team has been working on creating more clearly defined interest areas and will continue this work. The family wall has been relocated to an area where children can freely access it and sit to observe their families. The service also plans to declutter previous donations by passing items on to charitable organisations. A submission has been made to Better Start QDS Team and will further support the service in improving the room layout. Engaging with the national early years quality development team will prevent this non-compliance from occurring in the future. The service plans not to accept as many donations going forward and but will review donations on a case-by-case basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of changes made as described in action submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 service was secured internally with a high lock system, out of reach of the children. Staff could view any visitors to the service through the windows in the entrance hall.

The perimeter of the adjacent outdoor play area was secured by a locked gate and child height old stone wall. The service's designated outdoor green area was secured by natural boundary ditches and to the front, a high wooden fence and secured wooden gate.

Cleaning materials and equipment was observed to be stored away from the children, and the kitchenette area was inaccessible to the children attending.

The service's child safeguarding statement was displayed on the parents' notice board in the entrance hall of the service.

Infection Control:

There was an adequate number of children's toilet facilities provided in the service to meet the needs of the children present. A designated staff toilet was available in an adjacent building.

The children's toilets were child sized, and each toilet unit was supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use.

Staff were observed to safely disinfect the children's tables with paper towelling and suitable disinfectant prior to mealtimes and to support and prompt children with handwashing before snack and mealtimes as well as after toileting and outdoor play.

Administration of Medication:

There was a suitable administration of medication policy in place in the service for the safe administration of medications. Staff were well informed of the procedures to follow in gaining parental consent and administering anti-febrile medications and prescribed medications.

Outing:

A suitable outings policy had been developed in the service with an additional "Green Area Policy" specific to the children's daily trips across the road to their grass outdoor play area. The Green Area Policy included reference to road safety guidelines which the children are educated on at the start of the school year as well as the procedures to be followed by staff and children as they navigate their way across the zebra crossing and along the footpath to the entrance of the green area. Children are equipped with high viz vests and a safety walking rope, which they all hold onto during the procedure.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for five staff members. However, one vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The staff member whose vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years no longer works at the service and ceased employment within the past three years.

The Manager will ensure that staff members information is removed from staff files when they cease employment with the service going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The response submitted is appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of these actions 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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's daily attendance and departure times to and from the service were recorded daily. On review of the attendance records the number of children present in the service correlated with the attendance records maintained by the staff.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) While the inspector observed that the staff ensured that no other person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without their entry being

approved by an employee., there was no visitor record maintained detailing visitors to the service. The visitor record must include the date, person's name, contact number, reason for entry, name of person approving access to the service, check in and out times.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The manager has created and implemented a visitor sign in folder

The Manager has informed the staff team about the visitor sign-in folder, and all staff will endeavour to maintain this record.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of corresponding developed record as stated in the actions submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

There were three staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. During the inspection there were two staff members with FAR training present.

Records in staff files demonstrated that three staff members had recently carried out refresher course training in FAR which was not due to expire until 03 and 31 July 2027.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a first aid bag available in the kitchenette area which was observed to be adequately stocked and always available.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*
- (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) The registered provider ensured that the following fire records were maintained.
- (a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 09 December 2025.
 - (b) A record was maintained of the dates of checking and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and fire alarm system in the service, by a reputable contractor. The last maintenance check for the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place in December 2025 and the last maintenance service for the smoke alarm system was recorded as having last taken place on the 06 October 2025.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) While it is acknowledged that a fire evacuation procedure was displayed in the main classroom, it was not specific to the layout of the service in relation to exit pathways and designated assembly points.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A service-specific evacuation procedure has been developed, now detailing the fire exit and assembly point. The staff team have been updated, and the procedure is publicly displayed within the service

Staff have been fully briefed, and the evacuation procedure is now clearly displayed in the service for all to see.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of site-specific fire drill and floor exit plan.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a part-time childcare service for up to 26 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall. The maximum number of children currently attending the service is 26.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.