

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK071		
Name of Service:	Smarties Montessori		
Address of Service:	Inchacarron, Mullinavat, Kilkenny		
Eircode:	X91 Y36X		
Name of Registered Provider:	Margaret Walsh		
Service type:	Part Time		
Date of Inspection:	27 February 2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM 7
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Waterford Community Services Cork Road Waterford		
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ryan.		
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

Smarties Montessori is a privately owned childcare service on the outskirts of Mullinavat village in south county Kilkenny. The service operates from a two-storey purpose-built premises on the grounds of the registered provider's home. The building accommodates two early years rooms, a kitchenette, sanitary facilities and storage room for toys and equipment. There is approximately one acre of ground with a secured outdoor play area at the rear of the registered providers home, with car parking facilities to the front of the premises. Smarties Montessori presently offers part time care for 16 children and can accommodate 33 children on a sessional basis for the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service opens from 09:00hrs to 14:00hrs Monday to Friday. The service also provides school age childcare from 14:00hrs to 17:00hrs with a pickup service from the local school.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner/manager and is part of the staff compliment. The service has four additional employees with qualifications at the minimum Level 5 and above in Early Childhood Care 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 announced/unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/. 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 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge. The service also had a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) At all times during the inspection the registered provider was on the premises.

(2)
On review of the staff files, it was evident that one new staff member was employed to work with the children since the fit for purpose inspection on the 1 July 2022.

The following was observed on the new staff members file:

- (a) There were two written validated references from past employers.
- (b) Not applicable as all written references were from past employers.
- (c) There was evidence of a completed Garda vetting disclosure certificate from An Garda Síochána.
- (d) Not applicable as the staff member had not resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)
There was evidence that all staff employed to work directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5, 6, and 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. There was evidence of continuous professional development and qualification certificates on file

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

On the morning of the inspection there were 30 children aged 2 years 8 months to 5 years, being cared for by 4 childcare staff.

In the afternoon of the inspection there were 2 childcare staff working directly with 7 children, aged 2 years 8 months to 5 years old.

At all times during the inspection the registered provider was supernumerary to the required staff ratios and was available to help if required.

(2)

The staff: child ratios in each room met the requirement for the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, throughout the duration of the inspection.

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

Basis Needs

The service commenced part-time care in September 2022. All children attending had a snack break at 10:30 hours, which was provided by parents and brought from home. These were observed to comprise of yogurts, fresh fruit, crackers and sandwiches.

All the children remaining in the service for the extended hours sat around the table together for the second food break at 13:00 hours. This was observed to be sociable and unrushed. The children were overheard chatting about recycling their lunch cartons. The registered provider explained that the theme of the month was recycling and demonstrated some of the items made with the children from recycled materials. Drinking water was available on a small table accessible to children throughout the day.

On the day all children were toilet trained and were observed accessing the toilet facilities off the downstairs care room whenever they needed. Child height wash hand basins were available in the toilet area and staff were observed checking in with children and encouraging hand washing after using the toilet.

The downstairs care room had double doors that opened onto an outdoor room and then onto the large outdoor play area. The children were observed to be happy and engrossed in mostly outdoor play on the day and were observed moving freely between the indoors and outdoors as they so decided.

For the children needing to relax, a sizable rest area was set up in a well-defined corner of the ground floor room, where children were observed sitting on the couch and comfortable chairs browsing through books. Children also had the option to use sleeping mats in the event of being tired.

Supporting relationships

The service was located on the private grounds of the registered providers home and was within walking distance from the village national school. The registered provider informed the inspector that parents and guardians were pleased with the convenience of the extra hours as these coincided with the junior cycle pick up from the school. At 14:00 hours some children were brought by bus to the national school for ease of collection by their parents and guardians. The registered provider was flexible in the arrangements for the part time care in so far as responding to the number of days that the parents requested.

The children were observed to be happy. On the day, one child was partaking in the part-time care for the first time and staff were observed including and encouraging this child. The staff demonstrated respect and friendliness towards each other as they consulted with each other regarding the children's needs and choices. The interactions between the children and staff were observed to be familiar and supportive. Staff were overheard speaking with the children about their siblings, parents and grandparents.

Communication with parents was through social media applications such as texting, phone calls, and informally at collection and drop off times. Parents and guardians were greeted as they arrived intermittently at collection time and were given brief feedback of their child's day at the service.

There was a comprehensive handbook for parents giving an overview of the policies and procedures for the service. The registered provider informed that all parents had received a copy of this by email prior to children starting in the service. Children's developmental progress and information was shared with parents at intervals throughout the year.

Community involvement was evidenced by photographic wall displays of a visit from the local An Garda Síochána. The registered provider informed the inspector of a recent outing to the local recycling bank when the theme of the month was recycling. She spoke of how the children enjoyed bringing with them bags of clothing and some bottles and cans. The registered provider welcomed parental involvement and a plan was in place for a parent to bring new chicks in advance of Easter.