

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY015			
Name of Service:	Bright Sparks Montessori			
Address of Service:	Gortamullen, Kenmare, Co. Kerry			
Eircode:	V93 XV76			
Name of Registered Provider:	Miriam O'Sullivan			
Service type:	Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	26/11/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	32	PM	30
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78			
Inspection undertaken by:	Ms. O'Reilly			
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	N/A			

Description of service

Bright Sparks Montessori is a registered privately owned early years service in operation since 2015. The service provides education and care to children from 2 to 6 years offering a sessional care service. Children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme are facilitated from 8:45 to 11:45 and 9.00 to 12.00pm and from 12.15pm to 3.15pm and 12.30pm to 3.30pm. At time of inspection the children were aged between 2 years 8 months and 6 years. While the registered opening hours are from 09:00 to 15:15hours each day, Monday to Friday. The current opening hours are from 08:45 to 15:30 hours each day Monday to Friday.

The service is situated on the main Kenmare to Sneem road a few minutes' walk from the centre of Kenmare town in Co Kerry. The premises is a converted dwelling house that has been suitably converted into a childcare facility. It provides 4 interlinked playrooms with sufficient toilet facilities, a secured outdoor play area, staff room/ kitchen and adequate storage facilities. There was ample car spaces provided to the front of the premises for the safe arrival and departure of the children with their families.

Staffing

At time of inspection, there were 8 adults employed at the early years setting involved in the direct care of the children who attend, and this includes the registered provider. There were four adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme. Each of the adults hold a relevant award 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 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 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, 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.*

(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 a person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The person in charge was present when the inspector arrived on the premises and remained for the duration of the inspection.
- (2)
- The recruitment records in relation to 8 adults who were employed at the service were the subject of the inspection.
- (a) Of the 16 required references, all references were from previous employers with records of validation on file.
 - (b) Not applicable as there were no references from another source other than a previous employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for each of the 8 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Not applicable as no adult had resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4) The 8 adults attached to the service had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education with copies of the relevant qualifications 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) A sufficient number of adults were observed to work with the children who attended the service.

(2) At the time of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of regulation.

Room 1 am and pm

There were 15 children with 4 adults in attendance in the morning and afternoon sessional service.

Room 2 am and pm

There were 17 children with 4 adults in attendance in the morning. There were 15 children with 4 adults in attendance in the afternoon.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(h) The service had a record that indicated the arrival and departure time of each child on a daily basis to the sessional service in the morning and afternoon.

(i) There was a staff roster that indicated each staff members arrival, departure and daily break time in the service were maintained.

(k) Electronic records of Accident and Incident records were maintained. A sample of the accident and incident records were reviewed. All accidents and incidents records were signed by the parent and staff members that witnessed the incident.

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

BASIC NEEDS

- The service promoted healthy eating and the food provided by the parents and guardians for the mid-morning snack was observed to be healthy and nutritious. The children each had a labelled water bottle which was stored on shelving and easily accessible to them during the session.
- The staff members were observed speaking with the children during snack time and using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction with the children which promoted a relaxed atmosphere.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. Self-toileting by the children was encouraged. The staff members were observed to assist where required each of the children when hand washing and hand drying, and the children were supported and encouraged prior to eating, post toileting and post outdoor play.
- The adults were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children's efforts were readily acknowledged and when children were calmly assisted to resolve minor conflicts.
- The staff members were observed speaking with the children during snack time and using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction with the children which promoted a relaxed atmosphere.
- An online application was predominantly used to share information with parents regarding their children's learning and play activities. Phone calls, a messaging application and informal face to face discussion at arrival and collection times and parent teacher meetings twice yearly were also incorporated.

- The children had ample free floor space both indoors and in the outdoor play area to socialise and investigate their environment.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The service had an entrance lobby which lead to two separate playrooms that were interlinked with 2 additional spacious rooms. The rooms were spacious, child-friendly, bright, and well-presented. Both rooms had easy access to the outdoor play area located to the side and rear end of the premise.
- Each room was equipped and furnished with age-appropriate play materials that were clean and in a good state of repair. The room were laid out to encourage thematic flow of play and entice curiosity and investigation, for example there were developed home corners with utensils to encourage pretend play.
- The rooms were furnished with wooden tables and chairs that were clean and well maintained.
- Tabletop activities included fine motor skill materials such as peg boards, jig saws and puzzles and children had access to small and large construction items.
- There was a well-equipped home corner with dress up and items to encourage pretend play.
- The layout of the rooms promoted the independent access of all the materials to foster children's autonomy and freedom of choice.
- A quiet corner was in place to facilitate quiet time. A supply of soft padded mats and cushions were available for the children to sit and relax. The quiet area was beside the book area where books were displayed at child height.
- Additional sinks were located in the playrooms for hand wash and cleaning up after arts and crafts.
- There was adequate space in the care rooms to accommodate a variety of play activities. Outdoor play was also observed during the inspection.
- There was a variety of play areas in the outdoor play area. Multi-sensory play experiences were provided that included a mud kitchen, digging areas and a number of tyres. There were two wooden cabins. There was a number of child sized bench seating. An outdoor canopied classroom was furnished to provide an outdoor classroom during finer weather.

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

- The service had a healthy eating policy in place, and this was closely adhered to as observed by the healthy, varied and nutritious lunches observed being eaten by the children. For example, sandwiches, wraps, rice cakes, chopped fruits and vegetables.
- There were generous supplies of cutlery and plates.

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 entrance door was observed secure when not in use on day of inspection. This minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the premises and reduced the likelihood of a child exiting, while unsupervised. A digital key code pad system was in place on the internal doors leading to the two playrooms.
- The outdoor play area was securely enclosed by a combination of the preschool building and a high fence and gates that were adequately secured.
- First aid boxes were appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- All of the available cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach on day of inspection.
- Staff members stored their personal belongings in the kitchen area.

Infection Control:

- Most of the wash hand basins were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towel dispensers, for hygienic hand washing and drying. Handwashing by the children was observed before the mid-morning food breaks and after toileting.

- Lidded, foot pedal operated bins were available for waste and disposal of single used papers towels throughout the service.
- There were fridges located in the kitchen which were used for the storage of the perishable items of the children's lunches.
- There was a nappy changing unit in the wheelchair access toilet, which was well stocked, clean and in good condition.

Safe Sleep:

- The service was categorized as a sessional service and a sleep facility was not required. The registered provider had however, developed a suitable rest area for the children to opt out of the scheduled activities if they so wished.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Children were observed standing on timber beams and jumping into a hollow depleted earth, sand and stone gravel pit with irregular surfaces located in the outdoor play area. This is considered a potential safety hazard to the children in its present state.

Infection Control:

2. In Room 1, in the children's toilet facilities on day of inspection, the following was found:
 - the water pressure was low in the three water taps present. There was no thermostatically controlled hot water available for hygienic hand washing in the stainless-steel wash hand basin during the morning and afternoon sessional service increasing the potential risk of cross infection.
3. In the children's toilet facility beside room 1, the toilet flush mechanism in one of the children's toilets was not in a proper state of repair and took a long time for the water to fill between toilet flushes. To prevent the potential risk of cross infection and taking into consideration the numbers of children in attendance each day in Room 1, children's toilets require to be in a proper state of repair at all times during the hours of operation.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

In the corrective and preventative response (CAPA) the following was stated:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The depleted construction play pit area has been refilled. The construction area will be periodically filled, and safety risk assessments will continue to be carried out on the area.

Infection Control:

2. A plumber was called, and a decision was made to reduce the number of taps from three to two in the stainless-steel wash hand basin therefore increasing the water flow from both taps when children are hand washing. There is now thermostatically controlled hot water from the two water taps in the wash hand basin in the children's toilet facility beside Room 1. Going forward the staff will check there is thermostatically controlled hot water during the morning and afternoon sessional service.
3. In the children's toilet facility beside Room 1, a plumber came the following day and replaced the fluid master in the toilet. The toilet flush mechanism in one of the children's toilets is now operating correctly.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of the filled construction area was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed satisfactory.

Infection Control:

2. Photographic evidence of the two new taps now in place in the wash hand basin and the invoice from the plumber was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed satisfactory.
3. Photographic evidence of the invoice from the plumber stating the work completed was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed satisfactory.

Summary Comment

- Correspondence forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate was examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 23 General Safety and Infection Control of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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 did ensure that there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certification on file indicated that three staff members held current up to date training and the three staff members were present on day of inspection.

(2)

(a) The first aid boxes were safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid boxes were stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the playrooms.

(b) The fully equipped first aid boxes were available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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.

(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) An record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 24/10/2024

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on the 14 November 2024.

(4)
The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for a maximum of 44 children attending until 27/03/2025. The records detailed the category of service covered which was sessional, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.