

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH008
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Blackrock Montessori School
-------------------------	-----------------------------

Address of Service:	Old Golf Links Rd, Blackrock, Dundalk, Co. Louth
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	A91 AH36
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Noreen Lally
-------------------------------------	--------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date(s) of Inspection:	23/10/2024
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	No.
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood
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

Blackrock Montessori Pre-School is a privately owned service that has been in operation since September 1995. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 13 pre-school children and provides sessional care and education to children from 3 to 6 years of age.

This service operates from the registered provider's own home. It is located in a residential area in the coastal village of Blackrock Co. Louth. There is parking onsite for drop off and collection. The premises consists of a purposely developed playroom, sanitary accommodation and the children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area to the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

There were 2 adults, including the registered provider, present on the day of inspection working directly with the children.

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 and safety*. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11, 19, 25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 would like 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)&(b) The service had a designated person in charge and named deputy person to deputise as required. The person in charge and deputy person were on the premises when the inspector arrived on the premises and were present throughout the inspection.

(2) There were 3 staff files presented for inspection and the following were reviewed:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for each of the 3 members of staff.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff employed in the service. The registered provider adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence of the required international police vetting was available for 1 staff member in the service who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period greater than six months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that each member of staff, who works directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications.

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 an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) On the day of the inspection when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 10:25, there were 2 adults including the registered provider working directly with the 10 pre-school children present.

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

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic Needs

- The staff were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff. The children were enthusiastically engaged in a pumpkin carving activity and the story about the "pumpkin and "puca" when the inspector arrived on the premises.
- The snacks were provided by the service and were observed to consist of a fresh fruit platter and a biscuit. The staff sat with the children during snack time and engaged in social conversation about the different types of fruit and their colours. They also discussed the 'colour of the week' which was brown and made the connection between the brown biscuit which the children were offered at snack time. Drinking water was available as required and the children were independent with 'tidy-up' after snack time and were observed to remove all plates and cups when they were finished.
- The children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and additional support was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- The children had a change of environment to the outdoor area where they engaged in a variety of outdoor games and were facilitated to choose what they played. The storage shed was left open to facilitate the children free choice. During this time some of the children played "imaginary chickens", while others played with bikes and ride on equipment and ball play with a basket and hoop.
- Communication with parents and guardians took place informally at drop off and collection. The staff stated that phone calls, notices and social media messages are also used to communicate with families and to provide a sustained connection between home and preschool.

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 a person trained in first aid for children was at all times available to the children attending the service. Documentary evidence was available of an up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) qualification for one adult in the service.
- (2)(a) and (b) The first aid box available was adequately equipped and was stored in a conspicuous location where it is easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

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 firefighting 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) A record was maintained of the monthly fire drills which had been completed in the service. The last recorded on 20/09/24.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises dated 10 /2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.