

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH047
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Name of Service:	Ladybird Lane Day Nursery & Montessori
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Address of Service:	Oriel Cove, Clogherhead, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A92 XF60
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Name of Registered Provider:	Maeveen Carroll
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	45	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & S. Skinnader
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Ladybird Lane Day Nursery & Montessori has been operating as a privately-owned childcare service in this setting since 2006. This service provides full day care, part-time and sessional care and education to pre-school children aged from 0 to 6 years. The service operates from 07:45 to 18:00 each weekday and the setting caters for a maximum of 65 children. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 09:00 to 12:00 each weekday.

The service operates from a purpose-built premises in a residential area of Clogherhead in Co. Louth. There is parking onsite for drop off and collection. The premises consist of 5 playrooms: 4 within the main building and 1 playroom in a separate building to the rear of the main building. There is also a spacious outdoor play area on the premises which is divided into 2 separate areas.

Staffing

There were 14 staff employed in the service including the following:

- Thirteen childcare staff who work directly with the children, which includes the registered provider and staff who provide relief in the service.
- One staff member who is employed to carry out catering duties.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Squirrels, Bunnies, Foxes and Owls rooms.

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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection in relation to an immediate safety concern that was identified regarding hot water. The registered provider responded and gave written assurances of appropriate immediate actions undertaken in the service to control the risk to children within 24 hours of the inspection

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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 who is also the registered provider and a named deputy person to deputise as required. Both were on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2) There were 15 files presented for inspection including the registered provider, 12 childcare staff, 1 catering staff member and a contracted teacher.

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 14 members of staff and the contracted teacher.
- All written references available were validated as required.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all 14 staff members in the service and the contracted teacher. The service 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) Following a review of the staff files presented on the day of inspection, international police vetting was available for 2 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the registered provider and 13 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school children had at least the minimum required Level 5 childcare qualification

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.

(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) During the period of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the day of the inspection when the inspectors arrived unannounced at the service, the following care rooms were in operation:

- The Owls Room: There were 2 staff members working directly with the 11 pre-school children present.
- The Bunnies Room: There were 2 staff members working directly with the 6 pre-school children present.

- The Foxes Room: There were 2 staff members directly with the 13 pre-school children present.
- The Squirrels Room: There were 2 staff members working directly with the 7 pre-school children present.
- The Hedgehogs Room: There were 2 staff members working directly with the 8 pre-school children present.

The registered provider and deputy person were present in the service and provided assistance in the care rooms as required. There was one additional staff member present in the service who was engaged in catering duties.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children's attendance records, this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

There were 5 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection: namely the Owls, Bunnies, Foxes, Hedgehogs and Squirrels Rooms. The Owls Room turned into the Butterflies Room in the afternoon for the children attending the service on a part-time and full day care basis.

A sampling process was used and as a result the Owls, Bunnies, Foxes and Squirrels Rooms are the subject of inspection under Regulation 19.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the childrens' learning, development and well-being were facilitated in the service:

BASIC NEEDS:

- In the Bunnies Room, individual child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the childrens' cues and routine.

- Nappies in all rooms were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- A weekly menu with a variety of meals was on display in the service. During the inspection, a homemade lunch consisting of mince stew, vegetables and mashed potato was served to the children attending on a part-time and full day care basis. Assistance was given to the younger children who required feeding. Bibs were put on the younger children as required and hands and faces cleaned appropriately after the meals. Consistency of the lunch was observed to be age appropriate throughout all rooms. A variety of snacks were also provided including toast and a variety of fresh fruit. The dinner which is served between 15:00-15:30 consisted of homemade chicken curry, peas and rice.
- Drinks were available to the children as required and included milk and water. The children's cups/bottles were available in the care rooms and the children could access them as needed.
- Attention was paid to personal care and appearance with noses and faces cleaned when necessary.
- The children had free movement in the care rooms and all children had a change of environment on a number of occasions. The children were dressed appropriately and happily played outside.

Supporting Relationships

- Throughout the care rooms, children were observed to be provided with sensitive care and nurturing interactions by all staff. A key worker system was in place in the service, and this was on display in the care rooms. It was observed that each staff member had a small group of children assigned to them and the key person took the lead in supporting that child's transitions, recording their daily activities, maintaining relationships with their families, and documenting their learning and development.
- In the Bunnies room staff completed a daily communication book on each child detailing sleep, nappy changing, toileting and meals. Throughout the service the staff also reported that communication with parents is conducted verbally at collection and drop off where parent come in to the service and discuss their child's 'day'. Meetings are also arranged if required to discuss any areas of concern. Scrap books are collated throughout the year and include pictures of activities, artwork and observations. These are sent home at the end of the year as a 'keep sake' for the children and parents of their time spent at preschool. Family feedback forms are used to enhance communication between the families and service. A newsletter for parents was also sent out throughout the year.

- The staff report regular communication through the staff group ‘communication app’. Staff meetings are also held to plan and discuss practice and plans for the service.
- Various strategies were used to support smooth transitions within the rooms. For example; timers and 5-minute warning to tidy up time.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- There was a soft area in the Bunnies room which consisted of a mat and cushions where a child could sit and relax or take a break from an activity.
- There was a sleep room off the Bunnies Room where there were 6 standard cots available for the children aged under 2 years of age to sleep. Day beds were also available for those children aged over 2 to rest on but these were not observed in use during the inspection.

(3)(a) There was an outdoor area to the rear and side of the premises which was divided into 2 separate areas;

Area 1:

This was a large safety surfaced area to the rear of the premises. A variety of toys and equipment was available including; a selection of ride on cars, balance bikes, scooters, tractor, rockers and a plastic caterpillar tunnel for climbing through. There was also a covered area called the “learning nook” that had tables benches and a blackboard and tyres. A grass area which was fenced and had sand pit and there was a large wooden boat, a roofed bench and table, a shed for toys and a smaller area which was concreted and tarmacked.

Area 2 was located directly off The Bunnies Room which was accessed by the children attending this room. The room door was left open, and the children were provided with a choice to freely move between the 2 areas. The

outdoor area had a safety surface and concrete ramp. A variety of play toys and equipment are available including; age-appropriate slides and a climbing frame, a sand tray with cover, dolls supporting play equipment, playhouses and a train tunnel for climbing through. Ride on equipment was also available.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) There was no soft area available in the Owls room, Squirrels or Foxes rooms for the children to access for rest or to take a break from activities if they required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Staff have been informed of the importance of the provision of soft areas for children to relax and take a break from activities. Staff are to monitor the area and report to management of any area that may need new equipment, cushions, mats etc.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 20 have been addressed and will be reviewed at the 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

- In each of the care rooms there were a variety of play materials and equipment. The equipment was suited to the ages and stages of development of the children present and also promoted many areas of child development. The play equipment was stored on low level open shelving which was accessible to the children.

- In the playrooms the toys and equipment available was divided into specific areas of interest including sensory play areas which included sand and water trays. There were also dress up areas, a home area with play kitchens, dolls and supporting play equipment, a construction area and an art gallery. Low level open shelving units contained a variety of manipulative and fine motor toys and equipment such as; a variety of blocks, jigsaws, interconnecting toys, animals and other small world toys. A rest and reading area with a variety of books and a mat with soft cushions were also available in the Bunnies room. In the Squirrels Room staff stated that there was a storage area available for additional toys and equipment to be rotated between the rooms.
- A variety of Montessori equipment was available in the Owls room that supported the Montessori education method e.g. number cards, frames, shapes, practical life equipment including lids and jars, locks and latches, frames with buttons & self-adhesive tape, sensorial equipment to stimulate the senses such as pink towers, touch boards and tablets and smelling bottles.
- Evidence of the children’s artwork was on display in each of the rooms and these were linked to the thematic planned curriculum, including fathers and grandads’ day cards, friendship hands, life cycle of the butterfly and handprint caterpillars, handprint and footprint ice cream cones and crabs and a variety of sea themed artwork.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The adult chair available in the Bunnies room was in a defective condition. One of the legs was broken and poses an injury risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The leg of the adult chair in the Bunnies room has been repaired. Staff are reminded to report defective equipment and furniture to management for repair or replacement.

Supporting documentation submitted

The daily safety check, risk assessment and cleaning record for the playrooms.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on this information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 21 has been addressed.

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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- All emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- Cleaning equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- All blind cords in the service were restricted or inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- Effective hand washing practices were observed during the inspection, after toileting, nappy changing and outdoor play and prior to snack time.
- Good environmental cleaning practices were observed during the inspection, with tables being wiped down prior to lunch, snack times and after activities.
- Pedal operated waste bins were observed in use and were appropriately maintained on the day of the inspection.
- Mouthed toy boxes were available in the care rooms and were observed in use for the removal of toys used by the children.
- When questioned the staff were able to describe the service 's procedure for the care of cot linen and blankets' in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Safe Sleep:

- Physical safe sleep observations were carried out every 10 minutes and documented as required according to the services safe sleep policy and best practice guidelines

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that all reasonable measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a preschool child in relation to the following:

General Safety:

- At 12:45, the hot water temperature in the disability access/staff toilet on the ground floor was recorded at 59.1°C. This was also observed being used by the children attending the upstairs rooms for nappy changes during the inspection.
At 12:20 the hot water in the sanitary area off the Owls room was recorded at 50.3°C. This exceeded the recommended maximum safe hot water temperature of 43°C. The safety checklist reviewed in the Owls Room indicated that no safety checks had been documented since April 2025.
As an immediate risk was identified, an immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of the inspection in relation to the elevated hot water temperatures.
- In the Foxes room, the CD player and lead was unsecure on a low-level shelf and therefore accessible to the children. This is a potential impact hazard.

Infection Control:

- There was inadequate spacing of cots in the sleep room. There were 6 cots present and 5 of the cots were closely aligned alongside each other which does not provide the required 50cms spacing for infection control purposes.
- In the Foxes and Squirrels room perishable lunch items were not stored appropriately in the refrigerator. This is a potential health and safety risk.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

General Safety

- The temperature of the hot water supply to the hand wash sinks have been adjusted via the under sink mixing valve. The temperature of the running water has been checked. See photographs attached. The staff have been educated about safe practices and have been reminded on the intended use of a mixer tap and how to adjust the temperature to the desired setting. Staff are to report any concerns to management. The temperature of the water in the hand wash sinks will be checked on a regular basis and recorded.
- The CD player has been moved to a shelf that is inaccessible to children.

Infection Control

- The spacing of the cots in the sleep room has been adjusted to ensure adequate spacing between the cots. Staff have been instructed to be vigilant and to inform the designated person in charge of any

potential risk to children, in any part of the service.

The designated persons in charge of the sleep room will monitor and review the room on an ongoing basis, to ensure all safety matters are complied with. Staff will report any issues to Management. Safe Sleep Notice includes required spacing of cots.

2. Parents have been informed that perishable lunch items are not permitted in children's lunch box for morning snack. Staff will monitor the children's lunch boxes on an ongoing basis for perishable items. If present, the item will be stored appropriately.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence hot water temperatures.

Safe sleep information on display for staff.

Documentary evidence of the daily safety check, risk assessment and cleaning record.

Email from registered provider stating that perishable foods brought into the service will be stored appropriately in a refrigerator until consumed.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with documentary and photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the corrective and preventative actions detailed will be assessed at the 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

(1) The registered provider ensured that there was a person trained as a First Aid Responder (FAR) at all times in the service as was evidenced by the available FAR certificates in the service.

(2)(a) and (b) There were several adequately stocked first aid boxes in the service available at all times and stored out of the reach of the children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence was available of an up-to-date insurance certificate that provided adequate cover for up to 65 children and included an expiry date of 27/03/2026.