

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH052		
Name of Service:	Little Legs Creche & Montessori Limited		
Address of Service:	Grangebellew, Drogheda, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A92 YH42		
Name of Registered Provider:	Denise Curran		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	19/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM 13
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Mc Kenna		
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

Little Legs Creche & Montessori Limited, established in 2014 is a privately-owned early years' service located in a rural setting near Dunleer, Co. Louth. The service operates from two care rooms attached to the ground floor of the registered provider's family home, along with a new purpose-built cabin located to the rear of the garden. The service is currently registered to accommodate preschool children aged 1-6 years from 7.30am to 6.00pm each weekday on a sessional, part time and full day care basis. The service closes for the month of July each year. Pre-school children of eligible age participate in the state funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 38 weeks annually. The service is also registered to provide School Age care.

Staffing

The registered provider and 5 staff members work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis. One student was on work placement on the day of inspection.

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, 23 and 26, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16. 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 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,

(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 service has a designated person in charge who is the registered provider, and a named person in charge in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the registered provider and named person in charge, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises at all times.

(2) The staff files for 6 adults, and one student were reviewed.

(a) (b) Two written and validated references from past employers, and or reputable sources in the absence of past employments were on file for 6 adults, and one student.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 6 staff. 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. Garda vetting for the one student was not required

(d) A review of the employment history for the 6 adults, and one student demonstrated that one adult had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the one adult was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 6 adults employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of 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.

(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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:

Morning

2 adults cared for 13 children aged 3 years 7 months to 4 years 8 months in Room 508.

1 adult cared for 8 children aged 3 years 1 month to 3 years 10 months in Snowdrop Room.

2 adults cared for 9 children aged 1 year 11 months to 2 years 10 months in Buttercup Room.

Afternoon

Room 508 is not used by preschool children in the afternoon.

2 adults cared for 8 children aged 3 years 1 months to 4 years 1 months in Snowdrop Room.

1 adult cared for 5 children aged 1 year 11 months to 2 years 10 months in Buttercup Room.

In addition to the above, the registered provider assisted across all care rooms when required, and prepared and served snacks and the hot meal. One student was present in the Snowdrop Room in the morning time.

(8) (a) A discussion with the person in charge, and a review of the staff roster demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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;

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (h)

The details of attendance of each preschool child on the day of inspection were not appropriately recorded.

- Two of the three care rooms attendance books did not record all the children in attendance on the day of inspection. Nine children were present in the Buttercup Room, with attendance recorded for two children completed. Eight children were present in the Snowdrop Room, the attendance records available demonstrated that no child had been signed in.

When the inspector brought this to the attention of the staff in the care rooms, the attendance records were completed.

- The attendance record in the Snowdrop room did not include one child who had recently started to attend the Snowdrop room. Staff advised the inspector that the child had recently moved over from another care room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- Child attendance books are now in each classroom and not kept with the manager. Staff have been made aware of the importance of signing each child in as they arrive. We have also added attendance book completed check to each class cleaning/check list chart.
- The child in question has now been transferred from Room 508 attendance and been added to Snowdrop room attendance book. The manager will ensure all roll books are up to date and include all children from each room and their details.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of an updated checklist to include completion of attendance books.

A copy of the updated child attendance record.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 16.

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

The following examples demonstrated how the registered provider ensured that the children’s learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

A two-week menu is in operation in the service. Meal times included an option for cereal or toast for breakfast upon arrival, two snack times at 9.30am and 11.30am/12.30pm, and a hot meal is served at 2.30pm. The menu on the day of inspection included cereal/ toast, breadsticks and fruit, sandwiches and yogurt, and a chicken stew for the hot meal. The children attending the ECCE session take in their own snacks from home to include yogurts, fruit, ham, cheese, sandwiches and crackers. Snack times were observed to be relaxed and unrushed with children given adequate time to enjoy their food. Drinks were available on a shelf within the Buttercup room with young children observed to point to their drinks at a time of their choosing and were observed to sit at the table while enjoying their drinks.

The older children were observed to use the toilet independently, with younger children supported and supervised by staff at toilet times. Set nappy changing times were part of the daily routine for younger children, with changes occurring more frequently where needed.

Aprons were provided for messy play activities, which were observed in use in the Buttercup room on the day of inspection, when the children took part in a “painting a bear cave” activity. Care was given to the children’s appearances with noses cleaned and bibs provided for younger children when needed. The children from Room 508 were observed to avail of outdoor play in the morning session and were observed to be dressed appropriately for the weather on the day.

Areas of rest were provided in all care rooms to include a variety of bean bags, cushions, soft child sized chairs and a soft sofa.

Supporting Relationships

The children appeared familiar with their daily routine, and displayed familiarity and strong relationships with the staff who cared for them. Opportunities for siblings to be together was observed on the day of inspection, where a young child was a little upset, and a visit to their siblings room provided a sense of comfort to the child. The children were observed to engage positively with their peers, with adults observed to provide praise and encouragement to the children for positive interactions. No disagreements between children were observed. The adults demonstrated sensitivity and warmth in their interactions with the children. The adults were observed to speak in soft tones, using language appropriate for the children within their care.

Communication with parents is in person, upon arrival and collection, and through the use of a messaging service.

Strong teamwork is evident among the staff, with transitions in the children's daily routines observed to be smooth.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor environment in each care room was warm and welcoming. Colourful painted murals on walls along with children's creative artwork, with bunting, hanging paper umbrellas and 3D clouds provided a bright and inviting background in the care rooms. Each care room was laid out with various interest areas. The rooms were presented in an organised manner, with space for many tabletop and floor play opportunities.

The care rooms provided a range of enriching play experiences for children. Areas included such as soft rest areas with books, role play to include shop and office play with dress up clothing. Small world areas to include farms, tool benches, garages and houses with people, tools, animals and cars. Creative area and playdough materials and equipment. Tabletop toys to include sensory, jigsaws, connecting and building toys were also provided. The play equipment was positioned on low level easily accessible shelving for the children. The tables and chairs within each care room were suitable for the number, age and stage of development of the children in attendance. The outdoor area provided include three separate areas, with a variety of ground surfacing to include bark, grass, soft mats and tarmac. The outdoor area is spacious and secure and was laid out with various areas of interest. Playhouses, mud kitchens with real life materials, wooden logs, seesaws, ride on trucks, a buddy bench, slides, and a climbing structure were some of the areas and equipment available for children's use.

Programme of Activities

The materials and equipment provided in both the indoor and outdoor environments enabled many opportunities for various types of play. Children were observed to engage in painting, playdough, role play and singing and dancing activities. An action song about bears was observed in the Buttercup Room with children actively engaged in physical actions, supported closely by the staff. The children in the Snowdrop room were observed to take part in a discussion about hibernation, the colour brown and play a matching game. The children in Room 508 were observed to take part in free play of their choice, playdough, role play and outdoor play.

All children were observed to actively engage in their play environments. Staff demonstrated an awareness of children's choices. Where children chose not to take part in a planned activity, they were supported in making decisions of their own.

Curriculum planning was in place and up to date. The recent and current themes were Autumn, Winter and Hibernation. Activities and creative art work on display linked in with the recent and current themes.

Observations of the children's play and interests were recorded, which was linked into the curriculum planning.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- Upon the inspectors arrival the main entrance door was secured. A visitor log is maintained.
- The garden area is secured by fencing and gates. The children were observed to be appropriately supervised by the adults when in the outdoor areas.
- Play materials and equipment available for the childrens' use was maintained in good repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children. The door remained locked when not in use.
- Storage areas remained inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of the children.
- Fire exits remained unobstructed during the inspection process.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal bins and paper towels were available for handwashing. The children were observed to wash their hands after nappy changing/ toilet times and before their snack time.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to snack times and following messy play activities.
- Appropriate nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with the service policy and procedure.
- Cleaning schedules were in place, with records completed up to date. The service was presented in a clean and hygienic manner.

Safe Sleep:

- Sleep facilities for children over 2 years of age are provided. An area located off the Buttercup Room is used for sleeping children. The area contained 6 stackable beds, with appropriate bed linen available for the use of children aged 2 years and over. The bed linen is laundered in the service.
- Sleep records available detailed the child's name, position, breathing and colour and staff signature, with check recorded at 10-minute intervals.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for 6 staff members. However, three of these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. Two children's lunches were observed to contain whole grapes, and this went unnoticed by the staff present. Whole grapes for children pose a choking hazard.
3. A child in attendance in the Buttercup Room, which catered for children aged 1 to 3 years was observed to wear a teething necklace. Teething jewellery poses several serious risks including the risks of strangulation and choking/inhalation to babies and children under 3 years of age. Amber bead teething jewellery is prohibited for use in early years services for children under 3 years old.

Infection Control:

4. Children's snacks provided by the parents, some of which contained meat and dairy produce, were stored in the children's school bags in the hallway at room temperature on the day of inspection, rather than in the fridge. This increased the risk of bacteria multiplying in the perishable food items.

Safe Sleep:

5. The service is registered to care for children aged 1 to 6 years, however there is no sleep equipment available for children under 2 years. It is acknowledged that as advised by staff that the one child aged under 1 year 11

months in attendance does not currently sleep during their time in the service. A part time/full day care service must ensure there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All 3 staff members have applied for their renewed garda vetting. Once received, manager will email them to the inspector. The manager will do annual checks on all staff paperwork to ensure everything remains up to date.
2. A note has been sent to all parents regarding lunches and the importance of cutting up fruit. Staff have been informed of the importance of checking each lunch before the children eat, and this has been added to the rooms cleaning/check list.
3. The teething necklace was removed, and the parent were informed verbally and by letter that the teething necklace was not permitted in the service. Staff have been informed of the importance of checking each child to ensure they do not have anything on them that is considered a safety risk. It has also been added to the policies and procedures that no child will be allowed to attend the service while wearing teething beads/necklace.

Infection Control:

4. A fridge has been purchased and all dairy/perishable lunch is now stored in the fridge. The staff have been informed of this requirement and it has been added to daily check/cleaning chart to ensure all lunches are put into the fridge on arrival.

Safe Sleep:

5. The service purchased a cocoon bed for children under 2 years to have access to sleep/rest. A care plan will be put in place for any child under 2 years who sleeps in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Two updated Garda vetting's have been received.
2. A copy of updated checklist to include lunch checks.
3. Copy of letter issued to parents. Copy of service policy.

Infection Control:

4. Photographic evidence and a copy of updated checklist to include lunches placed into refrigerator.

Safe Sleep:

5. Copy of purchase invoice.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider to points listed at number 2, 3, 4 and 5 above in Regulation 23 have adequately addressed the non-compliances found upon inspection.

The non-compliance listed at number 1 remains partly outstanding, as one remaining updated garda vetting has not been submitted to the inspectorate. This will be reviewed upon the next inspection.

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) A record of the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded on 18 October 2024.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated April 2024, and the smoke alarms was dated 28 March 2024.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls through the service and contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.