

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH062		
Name of Service:	The Maples Montessori School		
Address of Service:	St. Catherines, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A92 F598		
Name of Registered Provider:	Vicki Matthews		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	17/06/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham		
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
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Description of service

The Maples Montessori is a sessional preschool service which has been in operation in this location since 2002. The service provides sessional preschool care and education to children aged 2 years 8 months until they commence attendance at primary school. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE), the service is registered to provide sessional care from 09:00 am to 12 middays, 09:30am to 12:30pm and from 13:30pm to 16:30pm. The service provides the option of children attending for an additional 30 minutes for an extra fee.

The Maples Montessori is located in a converted bungalow in a residential location in Drogheda, Co Louth. There are 2 care room in the service namely the Orange room and the Blue room. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

Staffing

On the day of inspection there were 6 staff members working directly with the children 2 of whom are employed in the service to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs, a post which is funded by the minister as part of the Access and inclusion model scheme. The registered provider was present in the service in an administrative capacity and was available to provide support and assist in the service as necessary. An administration support staff was also present on the day. Two staff members were on leave 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/ 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

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) Ten files were reviewed, and the following was noted.

- (a) & (b) Twenty validated written references were available for the staff members.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the staff members. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes for three staff members as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for three staff members who had resided outside the state for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) The staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6A) Two staff members were employed to provide AIM support.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for one staff member who had resided outside the state for more than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Police vetting for the staff member submitted to the Inspectorate.

Supporting documentation submitted

Certificate of police vetting for the staff member received by the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 9.

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

(3) The adult/child ratio was correct.

In the **Blue Room**: Three adults (one staff providing AIM support) cared for 17 children attending a sessional service (aged between 2 years 6 months to 5 years).

In the **Orange Room**: Three adults (one staff providing AIM support) cared for 17 children attending a sessional service (aged between 2 years 6 months to 5 years).

The registered provider was also available to support the rooms when necessary.

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 of Infants and Children

- A healthy nutritious snack in line with the healthy eating policy of the service was provided for the children attending the service by their parents.
- The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to the age and stage of development, including hand washing, toileting and caring for their belongings.
- An appropriate daily routine was in place which allocate times for child – initiated play and learning and adult planned and facilitated activities.
- Transitions were clearly announced and signaled by staff. Children were given time to complete activities at their own pace before starting the next activity. This approach respected the children's learning engagements and resulted in a smooth flow in the routine.
- Snack time was a very social event with animated conversations and discussions. Staff encouraged children to be independent and to develop self-care skills at every opportunity.

Supporting Relationships Around the Children:

- Relationships between staff and the children were very supportive, warm, and consistently positive. Staff sat at the child's level while assisting them with activities. Staff were overheard praising children for sharing toys and supported children to find positive solutions to minor disputes.
- Children's individual learning journals were stored at their level and children could look through them as they wished. The books were a record of the child's time in the preschool with drawings, photographs and observations placed in their books throughout the year.
- An appropriate daily routine was in place which allocate times for child – initiated play and learning and adult planned and facilitated activities. Children were facilitated to opt out of an activity and participate in another activity of their choice if they wished.
- Children were observed happily engaged in rehearsing songs for their upcoming graduation.

- The staff members engaged in play activities with the children with lots of enthusiasm and laughter observed. The children appeared confident and relaxed in their environment. Language development was facilitated through reading, songs, and conversation.

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

The care rooms had well defined and supported areas of interest which included library areas beside rest areas, sensory trays, wooden puzzles and building blocks, home area, art and craft materials, musical instruments, dolls, and building blocks. A farm table and montessori equipment was also available. The rooms were bright and airy and children had lots of room to work on the tables or the floor if they wished. The outdoor area consisted of a hard surface and artificial grass area. Additionally, a covered area was available for the children where for example the kitchen and shop areas were located. Water table and sand tables were available, benches, climbing frame, playhouse, musical instruments, sensory boards and ride on toys.

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 in place on the day of inspection:

- The main door to the service was secured and the outdoor space was enclosed and had secure gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and the outdoor space.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy was implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.
- Children’s lunches were stored in the fridge to prevent the growth of food poisoning bacteria.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained on a daily basis.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

Compliance Information

(1) A record was kept of each child’s time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

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 service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service. Fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 25th May 2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced on 14th January 2025 and 17th June 2025 respectively.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had a valid insurance certificate for 45 preschool children with an expiry date of 27th November 2025