

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TTUSLA Identifier: | TU2015LH093 |
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| Name of Service: | Tallanstown Montessori Pre-School |
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| Address of Service: | Tallanstown, Dundalk, Co. Louth |
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| Eircode: | A91 YX04 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Joan Durnin, Laura Kerr |
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| Service type: | Sessional |
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| Date(s) of Inspection: | 04/04/2025 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 20 | PM | No. |
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| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable. |
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Description of service

Tallanstown Montessori Pre-school is a privately owned service that has been in operation since 2003. It provides a sessional service to pre-school children aged 3 years - 6 years. The service operates from Monday – Friday from 9.00am – 12.00pm.

The service operates from a prefabricated building on the grounds of a Primary school in the rural village of Tallanstown in Co. Louth. It consists of a playroom with adjoining sanitary facilities. The children access to a developed, enclosed outdoor play area on the premises

Staffing

The two registered providers and two childcare staff are employed to work directly with the preschool 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.

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 both registered providers 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 registered providers are the designated person in charge and a named deputy person to deputise as required. Both were on the premises when the inspector arrived at 10.30am and were present throughout the inspection.

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

(2) Four staff files were reviewed including files for the registered providers and 2 childcare staff.

The following was observed:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written references available for the registered providers and 2 staff members with evidence of validations for all references.

(c) A processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for all 4 members of staff. The registered providers adhered 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.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented for inspection international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that all members of staff, including the registered providers who work directly with the preschool children held at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification on the National Framework of Childcare Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent.

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 was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10.30am and remained so throughout the inspection. At this time there were 20 preschool children aged 3 to 4 years being cared for by the 2 registered providers.

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.

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 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.
- Snack time was observed to be a social, interactive occasion with all children observed seated in groups at the tables. During this time the children and staff were observed to chat about the activities they had enjoyed. Assistance was provided to open cartons and packets if required. Children who required additional time to relax and eat their lunch were facilitated and were supported by one of the staff members.
- 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.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

- The adults demonstrated sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for the children as evidenced in the positive use of language and soft tones in the playroom for example: *"tidy up time...good listening, you're nearly there...well done."*
- Communication with parents and guardians took place informally at drop off and collection. The staff stated that phone calls, notices and small media messages are also used to communicate with families and to provide a sustained connection between home and preschool. The staff also regularly send the children's scrap books and copies home to keep parents informed about the children's learning and some activities that they engage in at preschool.

- A key worker system was in place in the service with staff members allocated a group of children. The key person took the lead in, maintaining relationships with their families, and documenting their learning and development. The staff confirmed that they discuss daily any queries or concerns that they may have about the children. The staff also use social media messages to further enhance communication.
- A strong and positive relationship has been developed with the staff and children attending the on-site primary school. During the inspection 2 students attended the preschool to talk to the preschool children and to ask the staff about the history of the service. The registered providers reported that the principal and teachers also visit the preschool to introduce and meet with the children transitioning to primary school.

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:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- The outdoor area was enclosed and secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised. The registered providers stated that additional security ties were in place on the gates following a risk assessment of the area.
- The cleaning agents were inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- The television was secured on the shelving unit, and all wires and leads were inaccessible or secured.

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Infection Control:

- There was a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and single use paper hand towels available to support effective hand washing practices.

- Effective hand washing practices for the children were observed during the inspection, after toileting and messy play and prior to snack time.
- The pedal operated bins observed in use in the service, were appropriately maintained.
- The registered providers when questioned were familiar with cleaning procedures for the toys and equipment on the premises and the frequency that cleaning procedures were carried out.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drills were carried out on a regular basis as evidenced by the up-to-date fire drill records.

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 2 adults in the service.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid box was adequately stocked and was stored in a conspicuous location where it was easily accessible in the event of an emergency

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 which provided sufficient cover for the 22 preschool children attending the sessional service.