

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH108
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Tus Maith Montessori School
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Main Street, Collon, Co. Louth
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A92 E448
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Siobhan Moore
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	14/11/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	25	PM	8
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S. Taaffe
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable
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### Description of service

Tus Maith Montessori School is a part-time early years service which operates for 38 weeks each year and is registered to accommodate pre-school children aged 2 - 6 years from 9.00am to 1.00pm and from 2.00pm to 5.00pm each weekday. The service participates in the state funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am – 12.00midday from Monday to Friday. School aged children are also accommodated in the service each afternoon. Tus Maith Montessori School is conducted from a 2-story converted residence located in the small village of Collon in Co. Louth, with two pre-schools provided, namely the Pre-Montessori Room and the Montessori Room, both of which are located on the ground floor, with the pre-school children’s sanitary facilities also located on this level. The room designated for school aged children is located on the first floor, in addition to a sensory room, an office, staff room/kitchen and sanitary accommodation. An enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider and 4 core staff members work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis.

### 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – record of pre-school child.

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, 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider was the person in charge and had designated two named persons to deputise in her absence when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 9.30am on the morning of the inspection and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and 2 written, validated references available for the 4 staff members employed in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and the 4 staff members. These records demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files there was no evidence that international police vetting was required for the registered provider or any member of staff.

(4) The registered provider and the 4 staff members all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

### 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 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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the early years service.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection.

- In ECCE Room 1 there were 12 pre-school children aged 2 years 5 months to 4 years 8 months being cared for by 3 staff members. Nine of the 12 children were attending on a sessional basis.
- In ECCE Room 2 there were 13 children aged 3 years 9 months to 4 years 10 months being cared for by the registered provider and 1 staff member. Eight of the 13 children were attending on a sessional basis.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children’s records. Each of the 12 registration forms reviewed by the inspector were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

### 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 registered provider and staff members ensured that each child’s learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service as evidenced by the following examples:

### Basic needs:

- The registered provider and staff members were observed working collaboratively and responsively which created a caring, supportive and warm atmosphere for the children in the service. This was particularly evidenced by the positive regard shown by the registered provider and staff members towards all children in the service, including those children with additional needs, fostering each child's inclusion and involvement in activities. Examples of this, underpinned by the child-led approach utilised in the service, were demonstrated by the registered provider and staff members displaying anticipation and appropriate responsiveness in a kind and caring manner when children experienced challenges within the environment and when children chose to change or opt out of activities.
- The adults were attentive to the children's personal care needs. Nappies were changed when needed and the adults were observed to be responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with prompting, discreet supervision and assistance provided when required. The adults ensured children were dressed appropriately for outdoor play.
- The children brought healthy snacks from home, in line with the healthy eating policy of the service. The adults were observed chatting with the children at snack time, encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- Both care rooms provided opportunity for rest and relaxation with comfortable spaces provided equipped with child-sized armchairs, floor mats, cushions and blankets. The service has stackable floor beds available in the event a child needed to nap or sleep. The youngest children attending the service were currently attending on a sessional basis only.
- All children in the service were observed to have spent time outdoors on the day of inspection.

### Supporting Relationships around Children

- The registered provider and staff members were observed using welcoming facial expressions and warm vocal tones when engaging with the children and showed a keen interest in what each child was doing. The adults were observed affirming and offering praise and encouragement to the children for their efforts and involvement in activities.
- In both care rooms the registered provider and staff members were observed warmly engaging with the children, encouraging them with positive feedback and facilitating their play activities. The adults provided comfort and reassurance to children during the inspection and responded to children's requests for activities or support in a timely manner. The staff members were observed acting as play partners with

the children, including building blocks, making jigsaws and having their hair brushed by the children in a relaxed atmosphere.

- The staff supported smooth transitions for children with the use of timers and verbal strategies including prompts and songs to inform and prepare children for an upcoming change in their routine. The children were observed to respond enthusiastically to these strategies.
- A wide range of approaches were implemented to ensure regular two-way communication took place with the parents and there was evidence of strong family engagement with the service. Examples of this included information on their children’s learning and development being shared with parents informally at drop-off and collection times on a daily basis. A mobile app was also used to communicate children’s routines and activities to parents and guardians on a regular basis. Additionally it was evident through conversation, observations and documentation that the adults were working positively with parents when they identified that a child may need additional resources to support their well-being and facilitate meaningful engagement in the service.

### Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were laid out in defined interest areas to facilitate self-directed play and extend children’s learning. These interest areas included well developed home corners with real-life utensils, packaging, dolls and baby care items; construction corners; art and craft stations; small world play areas; tabletop activity areas, and reading areas. Toys and play materials were accessible to children and stored on low level shelving which encouraged children to find and return materials. There were also a wide range of books available in the library areas that supported children’s language development.
- Tray top activity tables were set up as winter scenes with cardboard caves, cotton wool, cones, twigs, leaves, deer, owls penguins and robins.
- Photographs of the children, their families and their learning experiences in the service were very visible as evidenced through the broad range of photographs on display.
- The sensory room on the first floor contained a range of equipment to support sensory experiences and activities for the children in attendance. These included fibre optic light tubes and cables, activity boards, water mats, textured toys, and netting in place enclosing a cosy space beneath a standard table equipped with soft toys, cushions and matting.
- The fully enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the premises was surfaced in artificial grass laid out in defined interest areas and was very well resourced with equipment and materials to facilitate play

experiences for the children. A lean-to structure covered with plastic corrugated roof sheeting provided shelter for the children and staff members. Play equipment included outdoor kitchens with real-life pots and pans, a range of ride-on toys and self-propel cars, low level slides, rocking toys, a large well-resourced sand table. Access to the service is gained by entering a gate leading into the outdoor play area and through the entrance door into the main hallway on the ground floor of the premises.

### 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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered provider and staff members to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service:

#### General Safety:

- The front and rear doors and the side gate were appropriately secured which prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised and prevented unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. A sounder alarm was in place on both the front door and the rear door leading in to the service which was activated once the doors were opened, alerting staff.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- Windows and window blinds were appropriately secured.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.

#### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided for handwashing in the sanitary accommodation.
- The children were encouraged by the registered provider and staff members to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were encouraged, or assisted if necessary, to wash their hands after using the toilet and children's hands were washed after nappy changing.

- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and used appropriately for nappy changing procedures. A pedal operated lidded nappy bin was provided for the disposal of nappies. This reduces the risk of cross-contamination.
- The outdoor sand pit was fitted with a secure lid to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

### Administration of Medication:

- A child-specific care plan was available for a child attending the service to authorise staff members to administer prescribed medication in the event that the child would require it when present in the service.
- Medications were stored safely out of the reach of children.

### Safe Sleep:

- No child slept during the inspection.

### Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

### Outings:

- The registered provider stated that the service did not conduct outings.

## 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.*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*

*(a) no person other than-*

*(i) pre-school child attending the service,*

*(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*

*(iii) an employee, or*

*(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*

*(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

### Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present in attendance records provided in both care rooms, noting each child's arrival and departure times.

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's log was maintained and on arrival the inspector was requested to record her attendance on the premises and the purpose of the visit.

### 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) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in the FAR training records maintained for the registered provider and for 3 staff members and their scheduled attendance in the service's staff roster.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on the premises and were available for the children in attendance, 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 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 22/10/2024.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was certified as having been serviced most recently on 29/08/2024 and the smoke alarms on 26/08/2024.

(4) The fire evacuation procedure was displayed in the pre-school rooms in the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be conducted in the event of a fire.

### 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 insurance cover in place for 40 children attending the service on a part-time basis. The in-date policy showed that the service was insured until 27/03/2025. The attendance records confirmed that no more than 30 pre-school children currently attend the service at any one time.