

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK114		
Name of Service:	Little Steps Montessori		
Address of Service:	Community Resource Centre, Ballybrown, Clarina, Co Limerick		
Eircode:	V94 F5EY		
Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Durack		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	28 TH February 2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM 12
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick		
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne		
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

This privately operated sessional service was established in 2010.

The service caters for children aged 2 – 5 years for 3 hours in the morning from 08:30 – 12:00 hours and in the afternoon for 3 hours from 12:30 – 15:30 hours, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year, under the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE/ free pre-school year) for eligible children. The service has a designated room in the local community resource centre, Ballybrown, Clarina, Co Limerick and it comprises of one playroom, sanitary accommodation for the adults and children and outdoor play areas.

Staffing

The registered provider and two adults are working directly with the children daily. The adults hold an award in Early Childhood Care and Education ranging from level 9 and 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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 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*
- (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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 designated person in charge of operating the service at the time of the unannounced inspection. There was a named person available who could deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that the registered provider or the deputy were always available during the hours of operation.

(c) There was 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.

(2) The 3 staff files were available on site and were reviewed by the inspector.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for the three staff members working at the service.

(b) References were from either past employers or from other reputable sources as required.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of Garda Síochána were available for the 3 staff members working at the service. The Garda vetting disclosures were dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting, published by the inspectorate in September 2023 and effective from Jan 01/01/2024.

(d) Police vetting was on file for one staff member that had lived in another state for a period of longer than 6 months.

(3) All vetting procedures were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) The registered provider and the two staff had the appropriate childcare 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 18 pre-school children present with 3 childcare staff for the morning session and 12 preschool children and 3 staff present for the afternoon session. The adult child ratio was correct throughout the hours of operation.

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) (1) The service maintained an adequate record for each child attending the service, in accordance with Regulation 15(1) (a) to (i) in the 10 children's records inspected.

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-

(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

BASIC NEEDS:

The service ensured that each child's learning and development was facilitated within the daily life of the service. A healthy eating policy was in place and children brought a healthy snack each day with them to the preschool. Children's foods and perishable drinks were stored in the fridge in the preschool room and were accessible to the children when needed.

All children were toilet trained and were independently using the bathroom facilities. Help was offered if required. Nappy changing facilities were available if needed. Hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were accessible in the bathrooms to ensure hygienic washing of hands.

An adult couch with soft cushions was in the library corner of the room. This provided the children with a rest space if they needed quiet time away from the general play area.

Children had daily access to the outdoor space containing lots of sensory and natural play materials. A big emphasis was placed on outdoor play and extending the children learning outcomes in this area.

The staff were positive in their communication with the children, using soft tones of voice and listening to the children in a caring and gentle way.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The indoor environment was well laid out with a good range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children. Low level tables and chairs provided a space for the children for tabletop activities and for dining at mealtimes. Play equipment and materials were displayed on open low-level shelving and were grouped to provide specific interest spaces. Some of the areas included a construction area, a home corner equipped with a play kitchen, food props, dolls and prams, an imagination play area with dress up clothes, a rest /relaxation reading corner with a soft couch located next to a book stand, an art/craft area and a sensorial and messy play area. Children's family photographs and educational posters were displayed on the walls of the room at children's eye level.

The outdoor areas of the service offered the children space for physical play, for movement and for exploration. There were opportunities available that were exclusive to outdoor and risky play.

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) All the pre-school children who attended the service on the day were recorded on the attendance register and it included their time of arrival and their time of departure.

(a) No persons could enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee other than the following:

(i) A pre-school child.

(ii) A person dropping or collecting a child.

(iii) An employee.

(iv) An unpaid worker.

(b) A daily record in writing was kept of the entry on the premises of any such person on the visitors' book.

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) There were two staff members that had up to date first aid responder training.
- (2)(a) The registered provider ensured that a suitable equipped first aid box for children was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the outdoor play area and in the playroom.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to the children attending the preschool service.