

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK193		
Name of Service:	Whitethorns Montessori		
Address of Service:	3 St Nessans Park, Dooradoyle, Limerick, Co. Limerick		
Eircode:	V94 NY65		
Name of Registered Provider:	Laura O'Brien		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	21/06/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM 12
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate 2nd Floor Estuary House Henry Street Limerick		
Inspection undertaken by:	J Ryan		
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

This montessori preschool provides sessional care and education to preschool children aged 2.5 years to 5 years of age. The service operates two sessions each day from 09.00 - 12.00hrs and from 12.30 – 15.30hrs for 38 weeks a year and the setting caters for a maximum of 22 children per session. The curriculum is play based and is located in a domestic dwelling in an urban area. The service has an outdoor play area located at the rear of the premises where children have access to outdoor play equipment. There are four playrooms in the service which children rotate between.

Staffing

The service has a designated person in charge .The three adults employed in the service have childcare qualification that range between level 6 – 7 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/ safety/ The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,25,26 and 28.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was a designated person in charge and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge or the deputy person in charge were available on the premises as outlined in the staff roster.

(2) There were three new members of staff employed since the last inspection of the service on the 18/11/2020. The registered provider had ensured that each employee working in the service was suitable and competent as the following documents were available on file for all staff.

(a) References from the person's past employers and in particular the most recent employer.

(b) References from reputable sources in the case of a person who had no past employers.

(c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for all 4 staff present on the day.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no staff had lived in another state for a period of longer than 6 months.

(4) All staff had 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) At all times during the period of the inspection the person in charge ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children. The minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained as there were 3 staff working with 16 pre-school children in the morning and there were 3 staff working with 12 pre-school children in the afternoon.

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)BASIC NEEDS

There was a healthy eating policy in place. The snacks which were supplied by the service were observed to be nutritious and varied and consisted of crackers, cheese, a plain biscuit and a selection of fruit. Perishable foods were refrigerated. Bottled water was available in the room should a child become thirsty. The service had participated in the 'Healthy Ireland' project which supported the promotion of physical activity and healthy eating. Children moved from the playrooms to the dining area in the kitchen to eat their snacks.

Children's hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to.

Children used the toilet facilities next door independently or accompanied by a staff member if necessary.

Hygienic hand washing was observed to be completed by both children and staff at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation which had a supply of liquid soap, paper hand towels and hot water.

Children were allowed to move freely indoors between three rooms and from one activity to the next for specific periods of time. Facilities for quiet time were available in the room if required by children. The service had a yoga room upstairs which contained a large adult sized couch and beanbags. This room was used by the services key workers who brought small groups of 5-6 children to the room for some quiet time to relax.

Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner using a problem-solving approach.

Facilities for outdoor play were available and used by the children on the day of the inspection. There was a grass area and patio area containing a swing set, slides, child sized picnic benches, a farm area, a dinosaur area, a fairy garden and flower beds which the children helped plant. Risky play was observed as children were observed climbing on low level branches of trees in the garden.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

This outdoor sessional service was operated from the large back garden of the dwelling with sanitary accommodation and a wash hand basin recently installed outside.

Adequate and varied play equipment suited to the age and stage of development of the child was available in the service and in the outdoor play area.

The outside area was spacious and bright with trees for climbing and surrounded by walls and fences. Defined interest areas included a reading area, mud kitchen, farm, flower garden, bug hotel, land of dinosaurs, land of reptiles, a jungle, slides, swings, fairy door/magic area, tyres, gravel area and herb garden.

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 3 staff working at the service who had up to date first aid response training.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available and easily accessible on site in the playroom.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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) The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place on 17/05/2023.
- (b) The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently in October 2022. A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms serviced on 10/09/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the entrance hallway.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance available for the number of children attending the service.