

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LS013			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Stars Montessori School at KSH			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Castle Avenue, Kilminchy Village, Portlaoise, Co. Laois			
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 PE06			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Sonya Duggan			
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	12/02/2026			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	58	PM	35
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore Co. Offaly R35K1W4			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Flynn and A Spain			
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors			
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>				
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.			

### Description of service

Little Stars Montessori School at KSH is a privately owned and operated early years' service providing full day care, part time and sessional care to children aged between 2-6 years. The purpose built service is located in a residential area in Portlaoise town.

The service operates from, Monday to Friday between the hours of 08:30 – 17:00. Two sessional services are offered from 9am to 12 noon, and 12.30pm to-3.30pm.

The premises consists of a hallway, an office, five preschool rooms, a kitchen and dining room, and a staff room. A secure outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the building, which is subdivided into separate areas for use of children in different age groups. Parking is provided in the shared carpark to the front of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs thirteen adults to work in the service. There were thirteen adults present on the day of inspection; this included the registered provider, the person in charge and eleven childcare staff. The registered provider and person in charge facilitated the inspection on 12 February.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4) – Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1),(2),(8)(a) – Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid
- Regulation 26(1) (a) (b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures
- Regulation 28 – Insurance

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 inspectors wish 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,*
- © 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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise. The person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

Fourteen staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted;

(a)

Eighteen written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

Ten written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

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Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for fourteen staff members including the registered provider. In respect of all files reviewed, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available for six staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Thirteen staff members, working directly with children attending the service and the registered provider, held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 11 – Staffing levels

*(8) 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) 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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. In the morning on arrival at the service, there were 58 children being supervised directly by 11 adults and the person in charge. In the afternoon, there were 35 children being supervised by 8 adults and the person in charge.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

## Morning

- There were three staff providing direct care to sixteen children aged between 4.5 -5 years in room 1.
- There were two adults providing direct care to twelve children aged between 2 years 8 months – 4 years in room 2.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 4-5 years in room 3.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 2 years and 8 months – 3 years and 6 months in room 4.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 2 years and 8 months – 3 years and 6 months in room 5.

## Afternoon

- There were three staff providing direct care to fifteen children aged between 4.5 -5 years in room 1.
- There were two staff providing direct care to eight children aged between 2 years 8 months – 4 years in room 2.
- There was one adult providing direct care to six children aged between 4-5 years in room 3.
- There were two adults providing direct care to six children aged between 2 years and 8 months – 3 years and 6 months in room 5.

## (8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

### 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

The service had a healthy eating policy in place; all meals and snacks were provided by parents. Children's main meal brought in from home was stored in the fridge in the main kitchen and re-heated for each child. Children ate their main meal in the dining room and their snacks in the preschool rooms. Children sat at low level tables while eating and engaged in conversations with each other and with the staff members who were observed sitting at the tables with the children. Water stations were in each room with a jug of water, cups and individual water bottles readily available to the children throughout the day.

Staff reminded children to wash their hands after toileting and before meals.

Nappy changing facilities were available for any child who was not toileting trained.

##### Promoting relationships

On arrival at the service, children were observed to be engaged in a variety of tabletop activities such as sensory play with pasta in a tuff tray, painting, creating with modelling dough and artwork for Valentine's Day. Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Each preschool room had children's artwork displayed on the walls. Family walls, 'Our Class Birthday' and 'Celebrating our Community' displays, had photographs of the preschool children, their families and photographs from visits to the preschool from local community services such as the Guards, medic and a delivery person. This helped the children feel connected to home and their community.

In room four, story time was used to introduce the theme of "love" for Valentine's Day. Children were praised for "doing their jobs" as they returned chairs to the tables after story time.

Settling in and transitions were made as smooth as possible within the service. A child who had recently enrolled was observed to visit the service to familiarise themselves with the staff assigned for care of the child. Staff comforted the child and offered reassurance.

Diversity and inclusion were promoted with cultural days and festivals being celebrated within the service. Parents were invited into the service to talk to children about varying cultures and traditions, dressing up in traditional costumes and sharing food from a variety of countries.

Language development was supported. Children in Room 2, sat in a circle with two staff after morning outdoor play and sang songs including “twinkle twinkle little star” and “row, row, row the boat” with staff. A staff member was observed to show children pictures from a story book and pause to allow children answer questions posed during story time in response to the theme in the book leading up to “valentines day”.

A staff member was observed to sit at a low level participating in building blocks and making jigsaws with the children. A staff member was also observed to get down to child height at the water table and engage with the children as they made “hot chocolate” and “coffee” during pouring activities.

The staff advised the inspectors that information and updates regarding the children's day were recorded and shared with parents on an electronic messaging application. Daily handovers occur at drop off and collection times. Learning journals were maintained in each preschool room illustrating children’s learning and activities. These were provided to the parents to take home at the end of the preschool year.

### **Physical and material environment**

Containers and baskets on accessible low shelves offered a variety of Montessori equipment such as beads and child sized sweeping brush and dustpan. Each preschool room had a selection of Stickle bricks, musical instruments and toy animals to play with. Children in the Room 1 were observed engaged in tabletop activities such as building with wooden blocks, using modelling dough and shapes cutters and connector toys.

Imaginative play was supported. Room 1 had a purpose-built playhouse with a door and window cut out, inside was a toy kitchen with equipment and play food.

Children from each preschool room availed of outdoor play on the day of inspection. A large outdoor play area, divided into two separate play spaces, was provided at the back of the premises. The outdoor play areas were safely and securely fenced in by a high timber fence and gates. A climbing frame was available to the children for energetic play with impact absorbing surface underneath. A mud kitchen with pots and pans, sand box, construction area with hard hats and a planting area provided space for messy play and exploration. A mushroom table and stools anchored to the ground offered children the opportunity to sit and take a break from activities.

A second outdoor play area was provided with natural grass. Colourful bird houses, water shoots and blackboards were anchored to the timber fence. Goals and balls were provided for energetic play. A large timber chair and stools were provided for staff and children to sit outdoors for tabletop activities. A storage shed was provided outdoors to both store and rotate outdoor play equipment and 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:

Full length glass doors at the entrance to the service allowed the staff within to see any visitors arriving to the service. The entrance door was securely locked and controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored high up in cupboards out of reach of the children. Spare clothing for children was stored in the staff room.

Daily completed risk assessments for the outdoor play area were also viewed on the day of inspection.

##### Infection Control:

Warm water and liquid hand soap were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and after using the bathrooms. Meals and snacks provided from home for children were stored in labelled lunch boxes in the refrigerators in the onsite kitchen.

Foot pedal operated bins were available in each preschool room and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

The preschool rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows. Mechanical ventilation and openable windows were in the sanitary accommodation.

##### Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely out of reach of the children in the office. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Staff were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child.

##### Fire Safety:

Fire exits were easily recognisable and unobstructed. The fire assembly point was located in the carpark at the side of the premises.

##### Outing:

A policy was in place to support outings conducted by the service. Risk assessments were completed and documented for previous outings and viewed on the day of inspection.

## 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)  
Four staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR). Four FAR qualified staff members were available on the premises during the operational hours of the service on 12 February 2026.

(2)(a)  
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located in each preschool room throughout the service.

(b)  
A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in 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)

A written record was available of monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was recorded on 22 January 2026.

(b)

Records were kept of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment which was last serviced in June 2025.

The smoke alarm system in the premises was last serviced on 27 January 2026.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service. The evacuation route for all playrooms was on display in each preschool room.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 74 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.