

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LS056			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Scholars Montessori School			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Dublin Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois			
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 KHF3			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Audrey Whelan			
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional			
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	15/05/2023			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	10	PM	10
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	<p>Early Years Inspectorate,  Tusla, Child and Family Agency,  Primary Care Centre,  Church Avenue,  Tullamore,  Co. Offaly</p>			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	D. Molloy			
<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).

### Conditions if applicable

Not applicable

### Description of service

Little Scholars Montessori School is a sessional service located on the Dublin Road in the town of Portlaoise in Co. Laois and has been operational since 2010. The service caters for children aged between 2 and 6 years of age. The service operates two sessional services, Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 12 midday and from 12.00 to 3.00pm. Eighteen preschool children are enrolled in the service. A school age service is not provided.

Little Scholars Montessori School is operated from a converted room attached to the domestic dwelling of the registered provider. This room is used for the sole purpose of operating a childcare service. Access to the domestic dwelling is restricted.

The service consists of one playroom, a cloakroom /office and two sanitary accommodations with two wash hand basins. A fenced and secure outdoor play facility is provided to the side of the premises which can be accessed directly from the playroom.

Car parking is available outside the premises on the public road.

### Staffing

The registered provider was part of the staff compliment and was the person in charge and facilitated the inspection.

Staff working in the service had qualifications ranging from level 5 to level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework for Early Years.

### 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, premises, and facilities. The inspections 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.

(5) Paragraph (4) shall apply-

- (a) on or after 31 December 2016 in respect of pre-school services registered on or before 30 June 2016, and
- (b) on or after the date of registration in respect of all other pre-school services.

*(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-*

*(a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and*

*(b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.*

*(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “*

*(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”*

## Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present during the inspection.

(2)

The person in charge stated that no new staff member had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection.

(a) (b) (c)(d) Not Assessed as no new staff member had commenced employment.

(3)

Not assessed as no new staff employed.

(4) All employees held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5-on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6)(a)(b)

Not applicable as no employee had signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016, to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in a pre-school service.

(6A) No employee was working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)

### 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.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency*

#### Compliance Information

(1)  
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection. The registered provider ensured that there were sufficient adults working directly with the children. Records showed that the adult child ratio was upheld in the service.

(3)  
The registered provider had ensured that the adult child ratio was correctly maintained throughout the inspection and records showed that sufficient adults were rostered to work in the service each day.

(8)  
(c) Not applicable as the registered provider does not operate the service single-handedly.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 17 – Information for parents

*A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider had ensured that parents or guardians of a child proposing to attend the service could receive required information in relation to the operation of the service in the form of a site-specific parent's information sheet and could visit the service on an arranged visit .

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

*A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker, or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider had ensured that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations was available on the premises and could be viewed by

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker, or contractor, and
- (c) an authorised person.

## 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

##### **BASIC NEEDS:**

Children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring and were encouraged to take care of their own belongings including hanging up their coats and opening bags and lunch boxes and tidying up their toys when finished playing.

Children brought in their own healthy lunches from home in line with the healthy eating ethos of the service. The registered provider was in a position to provide a snack should a child forget their lunch.

All children were toilet trained and were reminded to wash their hands following toilet use.

##### **SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:**

Staff remained unchanged, and the children could expect the same adults to care from them each day, this consistency can help children form secure relationships at this early stage and supporting development of social skills, communication skills, and promote self confidence and self-esteem.

Children received encouragement and positive reinforcement throughout the session and this positivity was reflected in the way children engaged with each other and with the adults .

An inter-generational aspect of the service was noted in the fact that some children's parents had previously attended this service and these children were second-generation attendees.

A birthday wall display celebrated each child's birthday.

##### **PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:**

The outdoor play area was well stocked and well maintained. Soft well maintained lawn grass was provided in the outdoor play facility which was ideal for ball games as a soft landing beneath the climbing equipment .A wooden play house located at the sidewall of the garden provided sheltered place for children to play. An outdoor kitchen, sand play and outdoor blackboards provided opportunity for art drawing and outdoor play. A bench and seating were provided outdoors for picnicking in the fresh air.

Gardening and potting area was located at the end of the play area and an area designated for construction play was also in place.

Indoors the play room was bright and cheerful, offered a variety of well-maintained toys and equipment and Montessori equipment.

Low level shelving enabled children access their own choice of toys . Child sized furniture and low tables were provided, and children were observed playing with home-made play dough which they had made themselves under supervision.

### 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:

The service was secured by means of a controlled entry system which was operated from within the service. The door of the setting was operated on a bell system in order to prevent unauthorized access to the setting. The outdoor facility was securely fenced and secured with gates that were locked from within.

All cleaning products were stored out of reach of children.

A pest control system was in place to safe guard against pests.

##### Infection Control:

The service was well ventilated with openable windows .

Children were observed washing their hands regularly.

Adults were familiar with the Infection Control Policy of the service.

The sanitary accommodation was well ventilated to the outside air and was stocked with paper towels, dispensable soap, and pedal bins.

##### Administration of Medication:

A site-specific medication policy was available in the service and had been reviewed annually.

Adults were familiar with policy and practice in relation to safe administration of medication.

No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

##### Outing:

The registered provider stated that no outings were conducted from the service.

##### Fire Safety:

The fire exit was unobstructed.

Fire exit was fitted with exit display signage.

A notice of the fire assembly point was on display to show fire assembly point in the 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)

The registered provider had up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) certification and was available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible location on the premises.

(b) The first aid box was readily available in the service at all times.

### 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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*

*(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*

*(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*

*(b) an employee, and*

*(c) an authorised person.*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*

*(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 the fire drills carried out in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as being carried out on 25 April 2023 .

(b)

The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. The fire alarms were serviced on 28 October 2022, the firefighting equipment was checked in November 2022.

(2)

The record was available and open to parents, guardians, employees, and the authorised person.

(3)

The person in charge stated that records were retained for a period of 5 years after creation.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the premises.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

### Compliance Information

A copy of up-to-date insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. was available in the service. The insurance certificate was valid until March 2024.

## Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

### Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

*A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may reasonably require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider facilitated the inspection and provided access to all information as was required for completion of the inspection.