

# 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>	16/09/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	11	PM 8
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla, Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Flynn		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<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 Scholars Montessori school is a private sessional service which provides care and education to preschool children aged between two and six years old. The preschool is operated from a converted room attached to a domestic dwelling, in the town of Portlaoise, Co Laois. The service offers a morning session and an afternoon session. Little Scholars Montessori opens Monday to Friday between 08:40am - 11:40pm, and 11.40am – 14.45pm, for 38 weeks of the pre-school year. The service consists of one preschool room, a cloakroom and sanitary accommodation. A secure fenced outdoor play area is provided to the side of the premises which can be accessed directly from the preschool room.

### Staffing

The registered provider operates the service single handedly. An emergency contact is available to the service in the event that an emergency occurs during operational hours.

### 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,  
Regulation 9 (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (4) - Management and recruitment.  
Regulation 11(1), (3), (8)(c) Staffing Levels.

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child.

Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child.

Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials.

Regulation 24 (1), (3)(a) (b) – Checking in and our and records of attendance.

Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider 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.

(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

(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 to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person in charge, which was the registered provider, remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

The registered providers staff file was reviewed, and the following was noted:

(b)

Two written validated references were available from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and an emergency person. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

The registered provider held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 6 on the National Framework of 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.*

*(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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

(3)

The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection. For the morning session there were eleven children attending the service being supervised directly by the registered provider. The afternoon session had eight children being supervised directly by the registered provider.

(8) (c)

A person familiar with the operation of the service, was within close distance and available to assist the registered provider if required in the event of an emergency situation occurring.

### 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 sample of 11 records were reviewed by the inspector. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above regulation for the records reviewed.

### 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

Children brought in their snacks from home. Lunch was observed to include fruit pieces, yoghurts, croissants, cucumber and soda bread. Children's water bottles were available in their lunch bags within their reach throughout the session, should they feel thirsty at any stage. A water jug was stored in the fridge, and cups were also available in the care room. The children sat together eating their snack and engaged in conversation together. Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary.

##### Supporting relationships

Helpers were selected from a chart on the wall which identified the helper of the day. The 'helpers' job was to distribute the children's lunch bags to the children waiting at the table.

The registered provider communicates with parents via a group instant messaging system to provide general information to parents. Weekly updates of the children's learning and activities are provided to parents every Friday via the application. A parent information notice board was positioned at the preschool entrance, with updates such as school calendar and curriculum information. General updates between parents and the registered provider are provided at drop off and collection times also.

##### Physical and material environment

The pre school room was laid out to facilitate sensory experiences. Children had the opportunity to participate in arts and crafts activities. On arrival at the service, children were engaged in a sensory activity with rice in a tray, using funnels and other equipment. Fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, shape sorters and laces and spools for threading. Gross motor development was supported with outdoor climbing equipment and balls, and a wobble board. Visual aids such as child friendly pictures of the day's routine, were positioned at child's level on the wall. This supported the children to feel secure and independent.

Children were observed to move freely in the preschool room to choose their activities. Children sat on low level chairs in a circle and practiced their 'colour of the week'. Each child searched the room for a yellow object, before presenting it to the registered provider and the group. Other learning activities included recapping their numbers which they had learned during the week and singing songs together. Children enjoyed role play in the toy shop which included a scales and a play phone.

## Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The pre-school had a variety of age and developmentally appropriate toys, materials and equipment available for the children to use and play with including strings for tying, stickle bricks, wooden puzzles, train tracks and peg boards. Low level open shelving units displaying the pre-school materials and equipment and ensured the resources were easily accessible to the children at all times.

Defined areas of interest included a home/kitchen corner with cooking equipment, a play shop with toy food, a reading corner with bookshelves and a soft vinyl mat for the children to sit and relax on.

Other interest areas included a wall mounted black board a child level, a clothes rack with a variety of costumes, a toy garage with boats and cars and a wobble board.

The outdoor play area had natural grass and trees. Areas of interest such as an outdoor kitchen, a wooden climbing frame, sand tray, a swing set, a seating area and a playhouse were available to the children.

## 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 registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the recording of attendance maintained for the service.

**(3)(a)(b)**  
The person in charge ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.

### 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 was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and was available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to an adult 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 for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 30 May 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on 14 August.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned throughout the service.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b)

- Records identified that yearly maintenance of the smoke alarms has not been completed since 11 June 2024.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

Maintenance of the smoke alarm system was conducted on 30 September 2025. Fire safety and maintenance checks will be conducted at the start of each academic year as part of the building's yearly maintenance.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of maintenance record check received.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been adequately addressed.

## 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 twenty-two children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.