

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH099
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Name of Service:	Knightstown Montessori
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Address of Service:	Knightstown, Wilkinstown, Navan, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	C15 NP40
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre Moynihan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	6	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath C15 CP23
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Taaffe
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

Knightstown Montessori has been operating as an early years service since 2004, accommodating a maximum of 11 pre-school children aged 2 years to 6 years on a sessional basis. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, providing a morning session which runs from 9.00am to 12.00midday and an afternoon session which runs from 12.15 – 3.15pm each weekday for 38 weeks each year. School aged children are not accommodated in the service.

Staffing

The registered provider and 1 staff member work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis. A student who was not present on the day of the inspection and who is undertaking an early years training course is being facilitated to engage in a work experience placement in the service, working with the children under supervision in a supernumerary capacity.

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 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 member 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
- (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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and a staff member was appointed to deputise in her absence when required.

(b) The designated deputy person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at the service at 9.20am on the morning of inspection and remained on the premises for the duration of the morning session. The registered provider arrived on the premises during the inspection and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

The staff files for the registered provider, the core staff member and the student were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and 2 written, validated references available for the staff member and for the student.

(a) Four of the 6 written references reviewed were from past employers.

- (b) Two of the 6 written references reviewed were from sources other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider, the staff member, the student and for an adult male relative who resides in the adjoining family home. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files there was no evidence that international police vetting was required for the registered provider, staff member or student.
- (4) The registered provider and staff member held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 - 7 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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) On the morning of inspection 1 staff member was working directly with 6 pre-school children aged 3 years 7 months to 4 years 9 months who were all attending the service on a sessional basis.

On the afternoon of inspection the registered provider was working directly with 7 pre-school children aged 3 years 4 months to 3 years 11 months who were all attending the service on a sessional basis.

(8)(c) On the occasions when the service is operated single-handedly, including on the day of inspection, either the registered provider or staff member are available to be called upon and attend in the event of an emergency.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic needs:

- There was a warm child-led atmosphere in the service with both the registered provider and staff member observed engaging positively with the children throughout the inspection.
- Parents or guardians provided the children's snack and the staff member was observed to sit at the children's level, eating with and chatting to the children during snack-time in a relaxed atmosphere.
- All the children were toilet trained and used the toilet independently on the day of inspection with reminders, discreet supervision and assistance provided by the adults when required.
- Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive way. The registered provider and staff member promptly managed minor issues that arose and in a calm and supportive manner which prevented escalation or upset on the children's part.
- All children were afforded the opportunity for a change of environment to the outdoor play area and were dressed appropriately in waterproof clothing and wellies prior to going outside.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred with the registered provider and the staff member observed to speak warmly and positively to and about the children, offering choices to children, making eye contact, using the children's names and using gentle tones of voice.
- The registered provider and staff member positively encouraged and praised the children in relation to kind actions, sharing, taking turns and saying please and thank you.
- The registered provider and staff member were observed to support children in their play activities, both individually and in groups.
- The registered provider and staff member were observed speaking to parents in a friendly way at drop off and collection time on the day of inspection.

Physical and material environment:

- The children appeared comfortable, happy and relaxed in their surroundings.
- The service is conducted from one room which was bright and welcoming and provided a range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children. Suitable seating was provided for children and adults.
- The play materials and equipment were stored on low level shelves which supported the children in initiating and sustaining play activities.
- The pre-school room had a broad range of specialist Montessori equipment and play-based materials which were laid out in defined interest areas including a home corner, an art and crafts area, a construction area, a farmyard, and a library and relaxation area. Natural and wooden materials were particularly evident and readily used in the service.
- There was a suitable comfortable rest area available should a child wish to rest, relax or take a break from activities during the day.
- The fully enclosed outdoor play area adjoined the premises and was mainly covered in real grass. The space contained mature well-established trees and shrubs which readily provided opportunities for play and exploration in the open air. The children were observed enthusiastically engaging in a range of play experiences outdoors during the inspection including playing on the swings and slides, running, playing hide and seek, playing at the well-resourced outdoor kitchen, building make-believe campfires, making mud pies and stacking large rubber blocks. An open-sided lean-to structure equipped with child-sized

tables and chairs was in place along the perimeter of the premises which provided shelter for the children and staff members when outdoors.

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

The following are examples of the measures undertaken by the registered provider and staff member to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service:

General Safety:

- The door leading into the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The outdoor play area was secured by fencing, hedging and the walls of the premises to prevent a child from gaining unsupervised access to the roadway, neighbouring fields or other source of danger.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.
- The warm water temperature at the wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation was maintained at less than 43°C to facilitate hygienic hand washing without a risk of scalding the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.
- A documented risk assessment was carried out on the outdoor play area daily to ensure that this area was safe and suitable for use.

Infection Control:

- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and when required during the inspection. There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand hygiene at the wash hand basin in the sanitary accommodation.
- Tissues were provided for nasal hygiene and appropriate hygiene practices were observed when the staff member assisted children to blow their noses.

- The children's tables were observed to be appropriately cleaned prior to and following the morning snack.
- The sanitary accommodation, pre-school room and play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up-to-date cleaning schedules were on display.

Administration of Medication:

- An appropriate medication administration policy and record template were available to be used in the event that a child required medication to be administered at the service.

Outings:

- The inspector was informed that children were not taken on outings from the service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present in daily attendance records, noting each child's arrival and departure times.

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 and core staff member both held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training which ensured that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid box available in the service was suitably equipped and stored in a conspicuous location on the premises and was available for the children in attendance, in the event of an emergency.

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 the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on 12/02/2025.
- (b) A record was available in the service showing that the fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 11/12/2024 and a maintenance certificate was available to show that the smoke alarms were serviced on the week of the inspection.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 11 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis. The policy showed that the service was insured until 27/03/2025.