

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH106		
Name of Service:	Little Academy Montessori		
Address of Service:	98 Betaghstown Wood, Bettystown, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A92 D827		
Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Reilly		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	09/01/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	6	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle		
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		

Description of service

Little Academy Montessori is a sessional preschool service which has been in operation since 2007. The service provides sessional preschool care and education to children from 2 years 8 months until they commence attendance at primary school. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9am to 12 midday Monday to Friday. The service operates from a room on the ground floor of the registered providers family home. An outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children attending the service on a daily basis. An emergency contact person is available in the service.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child.

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, 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was an emergency contact person available if required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a) & (b) Two written references were available for the registered provider and for the emergency contact person in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and the emergency contact person.

(d) International police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the registered provider whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.

(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)-

(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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The registered provider was working directly with 6 children.

(8)(c) A second person familiar with the operation of the service is available in the event of it being required.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 7 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors.

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) Each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service in relation to the following:

Basic needs:

- On arrival, the children attending were engaged in meaningful play-based activities. The registered provider was present and joining in with the children's play, providing encouraging and nurturing interactions to children and supporting them to locate and set up materials to extend their play. Children appeared comfortable and confident to make choices about their learning, and the registered provider was responsive to the children's ideas and requests.
- The children brought their own morning snack with them from home. A calm social and relaxed atmosphere was created during snack time with the registered provider sitting, chatting to the children. The children were encouraged to be independent with appropriate support provided as required.
- The children present used the bathroom independently with discreet support provided by the registered provider as needed.
- The children's independence was encouraged, and they were supported to put on their coats, open their bags and lunch boxes, wash their hands following messy play and tidy up following play activities. Tissues were accessible to the children on a low shelf to enable the children to wipe their noses independently.

- There was an emphasis on praise and encouragement to promote the children’s positive behaviour and the children were spoken to in a kind and respectful manner.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The children were cared for by the registered provider each day which enabled them to form secure relationships, attachments and develop confidence within the service. The registered provider was observed to interact with children in a nurturing, sensitive and warm manner and the children were observed to be very comfortable in the service and sought out the registered provider for support and guidance as they required it.
- A family wall at the children’s level was available in the service which enables the children to bridge the gap between the service and home. The children’s artwork was displayed in the room, this supports the children’s wellbeing by feeling valued and appreciated.
- The registered provider updates parents on their children’s progress in the service on a daily basis at drop off and collection time.

Physical and material environment:

- The resources were easily available and accessible on low level shelving. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The indoor environment was bright and welcoming for the children. The room was equipped with a variety of specialised Montessori materials including sensorial, numeracy, cultural, and practical life all of which were readily accessible to the children. Additionally a well-resourced home area including a kitchen, dolls and doll care items were available along with a range of arts and crafts resource and a range of table top materials .The children were observed to choose the materials that they wanted to play with and were well supported in extending their play experiences by the registered provider.
- A range of books were available in the care room alongside the rest area to support the children’s language and reading development.
- An enclosed outdoor area directly accessible from the care room was available for the children. A well-resourced mud kitchen was provided, and a large sand tray provided the children with the opportunity to enjoy sensory play. A construction area, wall mounted blackboards, push along toys were also available for the children to play with and a bench with seating provided the children the opportunity to sit and engage in tabletop activities. All of the children present on the day of inspection enjoyed time in the outdoor area.

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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available at the sinks in the service. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and following messy play.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were available in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- Safe procedures were in place for the administration of medication. No child was observed having medication administered 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) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection in respect of the manager and deputy manager, both of whom work in the service on a daily basis.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

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 record was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated that the most recent fire drill was conducted on 20/12/2023.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 11/01/2023 and smoke alarms were serviced in January 2023.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were 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

An insurance certificate confirming insurance for 11 children attending the service at any one time on a sessional basis up until 27/03/2024 was available.