

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH114		
Name of Service:	Little Learners Montessori School		
Address of Service:	Coney Hall, Mornington, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A92 O3P8		
Name of Registered Provider:	Aideen O'Neill		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	20/04/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	12	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 & S Cully		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		

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

Little Learners Montessori is a sessional Early Years service which operates from a single storey commercial unit located in the coastal townland of Mornington Co Meath. The service caters for a maximum of 20 children aged 2 to 6 years from 9am to 12:30 pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service provides the option for children to attend for an extra 30 minutes for an additional fee. School aged children are not accommodated in this service.

Staffing

The registered provider and the core staff member were present on the day of inspection, both of whom were working directly with the children.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19, 23, 24,25,26 and 29; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, 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.

(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 early years' service and there was a named person available to deputise as required, both of whom were present throughout the inspection.

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

The files maintained for 3 staff members were reviewed and the following documentation was available:

(2)(a) & (b) Two written, validated references were available for the 3 staff members.

(a) All 6 references reviewed were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 3 staff members.

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

(4) All 3 staff members whose files were reviewed work directly with children in the service and each held appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 5 - 8 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)-*
- (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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The correct adult to child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection. There were 2 adults caring for 12 children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years.

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) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic needs:

- During the inspection the 2 staff members present were observed to be caring, responsive, sensitive and attentive in their interactions with the children. They demonstrated knowledge of children's individual needs and interests by providing flexibility and choice within the daily routine.

For example, children were encouraged to join circle time but when a younger child chose to move away, the second staff member followed their lead and supported them in another activity.

- Staff members encouraged children's independence skills at snack time by allowing children to take their lunchboxes and drinks from fridge to table and open their boxes/food. Staff members sat with children during snack time, engaging in conversation with children and supporting a social and relaxed atmosphere.
- Staff were observed providing comfort to children when needed, through gentle touch and tones of voice, and sensitively supporting them with problem solving when conflict arose between peers. Children that needed individual care and supports to fully engage in the session were supported to do so through the provision of visual aids, encouragement and flexibility.
- The staff members were observed to be responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with supervision and assistance provided when required while also encouraging the independence skills of older children.
- Children engaged in physical play and activity both outdoors and indoors and were given the choice to move between both spaces depending on their preference on the day.

Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the preschool room, where children were free to express themselves through play and discussion, with responsive staff members who showed interest in their play and interactions. The staff members spoke positively and warmly to and about the children during the inspection, regularly providing children with positive encouragement and praise.
- Transitions during the session was supported with strategies such as the use of a visual schedule, a sand timer and songs e.g., the clean-up song.
- Family photographs were on display in the preschool room, and children and staff were observed using the family wall to share stories. Family photos were used to provide reassurance to a new child in the preschool who was settling into the service.
- Along with the Family Wall, children's photographs and words were displayed on a 'All About Me' wall demonstrating that the service values children and families of all diversities and positively promotes children's sense of identity.
- Monthly newsletters are created for families to share the children's experiences in the service and include them in their learning and development while attending the service.

Physical and material environment:

- The indoor environment was arranged into learning/play areas that provided appropriate, diverse and creative experiences for children such as a well-resourced home corner, reading area, small world play area, fine motor and tabletop activity area, sensory area (tuff tray).
- Materials were freely available and easily accessible to children at all times, and where other materials were requested staff members providing them, for example, tents and tunnels.
- There was an outdoor space that had a number of materials and equipment that met children's learning and developmental needs, such as well-resourced sand tray, seating, slides, water wall and climbing frame.

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 entrance door leading into the service was appropriately secured. Entry to the service was accessible through a call bell system which staff members operated.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Emergency exits were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Warm water and liquid soap were available at the sinks in the sanitary accommodation to support the children in hand washing. The children washed their hands after using the toilet and before they had their morning snack.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Two child sized couches were available for the children to retreat to should they chose to take a break from activities throughout the day.

Fire Safety:

- Documentary evidence was available to confirm that fire drills are completed on a monthly basis in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The paper hand towels in the sanitary accommodation were not hygienically dispensed. The rolls of paper were stored loosely on worktops and were subjected to repeated handling; this was inadequate for infection control purposes.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Infection Control:

1. Following a delivery from service's regular paper towel supplier – which was delayed due to the mid-term break, leading to a substitute hand towel being required, which unfortunately did not fit in our dispensers – the paper hand towels in the sanitary accommodation have been secured in the dispensers installed in each WC.

Preventive Action

1. Due to the unreliability of service's current supplier, who delivers every 8 weeks, an alternative supplier, who will be able to deliver more frequently, is currently being sought. Stock checks will continue to be taken monthly to ensure a sufficient supply of correctly fitting paper hand towels is available.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The 11 children who were present in the service on the Early Years Inspectors arrival to the service at 09:40am were not signed into the attendance register until 10:30am. This posed a risk of the children not being counted in the event of an evacuation emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

All staff members have been informed of the importance of ensuring the children are signed in at arrival. The attendance record now remains in the reception area and children are signed in, at the door, as they arrive by the staff member welcoming them to the service each morning.

Preventive Action

The attendance record will remain in the reception area, where children will be signed in and out at the time of arrival and departure by the staff member present.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance has been reviewed and accepted.

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 in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection in respect of staff members.

(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 fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place on 03/03/2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises. The smoke alarms were certified as being serviced on the 27/09/2022
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

- (b) A record was not available of the maintenance of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment in the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (b) A record of the maintenance of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment has been obtained and placed in a file with other documents relating to fire safety.

Preventive Action

- (b) All records relating to fire safety will be stored together and accessible for further inspections.

Supporting documentation submitted

Maintenance record for firefighting equipment submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 26 - Fire safety measures has been reviewed and accepted.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

(b) safe and secure,

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

(b)The building was observed to be safe and secure. Access to the building was via a call bell system at a secure door. This reduced the risk of an unauthorised adult entering the premises or a child leaving the premises unsupervised.

Non-Compliance Information

(d)Wall tiles were removed from the area directly behind the wash hand basin in one of the children's bathrooms leaving a rough, uneven surface exposed. This area could not be cleaned effectively.

There were a number of holes in one of the bathroom walls which required repair to render them to a smooth finish to allow them to be cleaned effectively.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(d) Temporary sticky tiles have been placed over the exposed uneven surface, from where tiles were removed by staff as they had become loose and therefore posed a risk of injury to a child. This will allow for more effective cleaning of the area on a short-term basis, as manager will be carrying out a full renovation of the premises in July 2023 following a successful Building Blocks-Improvement Grant Application.

Preventive Action

(d) The sanitary areas will be completely refurbished during July and will be finished to ensure they can be cleaned effectively.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 29 - Premises has been reviewed and accepted.