

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015MH188 | | | |
| Name of Service: | The Caterpillar Academy of Montessori | | | |
| Address of Service: | Mount Nugent Road, Oldcastle, Co. Meath | | | |
| Eircode: | A82 PK15 | | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Ruth Bates | | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 09/10/2024 | | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 30 | PM | - |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84. | | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | S. Mc Kenna | | | |
| 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not Applicable |
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Description of service

The Caterpillar Academy of Montessori is a private Early Years' service in operation since 2010, located on the outskirts of Oldcastle, Co Meath. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, operating Monday to Friday from 9am to 12.30pm for children aged 2 to 6 years. The service operates from a converted school building and consists of two care rooms. Children's sanitary facilities are located within each care room. A hard surfaced and grass play area is available at the front of the building, with a grassed area located to the rear and side of the building.

Staffing

The service employs 7 staff (including the Registered Provider).

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 regulations 9,11,19,23,25,26 and 28. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

DRAFT

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 service has a designated person in charge, who is the registered provider, and a named person in charge in the absence of the registered provider.
- (b) Following discussion with the registered provider, it was demonstrated that at all times when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.
- (2) The staff files for 7 adults were reviewed.
- (a) (b) Two written and validated references from past employers, and or reputable sources in the absence of past employments were on file for the 7 adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 7 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all 7 employed staff.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 7 adults, demonstrated that one adult had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the one adult was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 7 adults employed to work with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher 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.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:

Three adults cared for 14 children aged 2 years 8 months to 5 years 6 months in Room 1.

Two adults cared for 16 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 6 months in Room 2.

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 each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

A rolling snack was operated in both care rooms, children were observed to avail of snack time throughout the pre-school session. Staff advised the inspector that they ensure where a child may not have had their snack prior to outdoor play time, they will provide gentle reminders to them. Children's snacks taken in from home, contained a variety of crackers, pancakes, sandwiches, meat, yogurt and fruits. Children's drinks were stored in the fridge and following snack time were placed in a basket which was taken outside for children to avail of during outdoor play time.

Children's independence was encouraged at toilet times. Where children needed support adults were observed to be close by if needed. Suitable outdoor clothing, spare clothes and aprons for messy activities were available to the children.

An area to rest was available in each care room to include soft cushions and bean bags.

The atmosphere in both care rooms was calm with children observed to be consistently engaged in play. A choice system for play areas was in use. The registered provider explained to the inspector this form of play and choice provides for smaller group opportunities and enhances the frequency of one-to-one time between children and adults. The children on the day were observed to understand the play/choice routine, and were observed to turn take in play areas.

The children availed of outdoor play on the day of inspection. Both care rooms joined together for outdoor play providing opportunities for family members and their siblings to play together.

Supporting Relationships

Positive interactions were observed between children, their peers and the adults caring for them. Conversations occurred at small group table top activities, and large group circle time.

Where minor disagreements occurred the adults dealt with this in a level that was age appropriate for the children, and together came up with solutions.

The children were observed to be familiar with the routine, for example when they finished their snack times they placed their bags with their coat for home time, and when the time came close for outdoor play time the children took their shoes off to get their wellie boots and coats on, transitions were observed to be smooth.

The staff team were observed to work well together both in each care room and when both rooms joined outside. Staff were observed to be familiar with all children attending the service.

Communication with parents is through a digital application which can be viewed in a variety of different languages. Email is used with policy updates, and in person chats at arrival and collection times was observed in practise.

Physical and Material Environment

The indoor care rooms were open, bright and spacious. Tables and chairs provided for children were suitable for their development needs. Adult chairs were available in both care rooms. Both care rooms were laid out with similar interest areas for example construction areas, writing stations, home corner, shop play, small tents with sensory materials, fine motor table top toys, farms and garages, balance equipment, Montessori materials and small world areas.

Children had their own spare clothes in the service, with individual spaces for their coats, wellie boots and lunch bags. Creative art pieces to include leaf prints were on display.

The service had two outdoor areas, with one observed in use on the day of inspection. This area had a variety of ground surfaces of tarmac, gravel, grass and soil areas. The space available was spacious for the number of children in attendance. Play equipment available and observed to be in use included slides, climbing frames, digging areas, a tunnel, A play house, chalkboard, wooden ship, a mud kitchen and a large sand pit within a covered shelter 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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The main door to the service was secured upon the inspector's arrival.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- Play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the age of the pre-school children in attendance.
- Fire exits and the pathways to the fire assembly point were kept clear from obstruction.
- Storage and kitchenette areas remained inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Play equipment and toys used by the children appeared in a clean and hygienic manner.
- Children's lunches and drinks were stored in the refrigerator.
- Children were observed to wash their hands following toileting times.
- Foot pedal operated bins, hand soap and paper towels were provided for handwashing.
- Self-care stations were set up in each of the care rooms to include a mirror, tissues and a bin for disposal of tissues.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The hot water in the two wash hand basins, in the children's sanitary areas in Room 1 were in excess of the recommended temperature of 43°C. It is acknowledged that when the inspector brought this to the attention of the registered provider, the water boiler controls were adjusted, and the temperature reduced to 43°C.

Infection Control:

2. Wooden boxed areas to cover piping behind and beside the toilets in the sanitary areas in Room 2 were unpainted, therefore could not be adequately cleaned to prevent cross infection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A new thermometer was purchased. We will continue to monitor the water like we have always done but with a new thermometer.

Infection Control:

2. All wood has been painted. We will make sure that all wood is painted in washable paint so it can be cleaned correctly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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 Response (FAR) was available to the children. The trained person is the registered provider who was present at all times during service operating hours. A second staff member was identified by the registered provider who is being enrolled in First Aid Response (FAR) training.
- (2) (a) (b) The first aid box was easily accessible, placed on a shelf in the hallway and available to the children attending 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

- (a) A record of fire drills that take place was available, with the most recent dated fire drill recorded on 05/09/2024.
- (b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms was dated 11 January 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

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 44 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis. The policy showed that the service was insured until 27/03/2025.