

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH195
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Name of Service:	The Montessori Story
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Address of Service:	11 Balreask Manor, Trim Road, Navan, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	C15 PX90
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lynda Carroll
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM	12
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray
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

The Montessori Story provides a sessional service to children from 2 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The service operates from 08:45 to 12:00 am, 09:00am to 12:30pm and from 12:30 to 15:30 pm Monday to Friday.

The service is located in an urban area in a renovated dwelling house and consists of the following rooms:

Downstairs:

Front room, Back room and Outside room.

Upstairs:

Back room and Front room.

The service also consists of an office, kitchen, sanitary facilities and an outdoor space to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

Employed in the service was an administrative manager, deputy manager, 6 childcare staff, 1 special needs assistant and a student on work placement.

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 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 wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, 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

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) Ten staff files were reviewed.

(a)(b) Ten validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the 10 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 3 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Seven childcare staff had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) Three staff members were employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) One staff member did not have a full childcare qualification. This staff member had a Special Needs Module completed and is in the process of completing a level 5 childcare qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) Police vetting has now been received for the staff member. The registered provider will ensure that staff members who require police vetting have vetting on file before commencing employment.

(4) This staff member will work under the supervision of a qualified staff at all times when providing support to a child with special needs. The staff member will be qualified in February 2025 and proof of qualification will be forwarded to the Inspectorate when received.

Supporting documentation submitted

Police vetting was submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in relation to police vetting. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

(4) Regarding the outstanding qualification, the registered provider has provided assurances that this staff member will work under the supervision of a qualified staff at all times. Proof of qualification will be forwarded to the Inspectorate when obtained. This non-compliance remains outstanding.

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) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) Present on the day of inspection were the administrative manager, deputy manager, 6 childcare staff and 1 special needs assistant providing care and education to 47 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 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

Basic needs:

- The adult's demonstrated knowledge of the individual care needs of the children especially the children with additional needs. Children were comforted when they became upset with the staff adopting behavioural management strategies such as holding the child, speaking to them softly, promoting turn taking and sharing and having a change of environment outdoors to support transitions. Children were offered choices and sought out the staff members for praise, encouragement and reassurance.

- Staff supported children’s learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative. The curriculum was child led incorporating the themes of the month which were “Halloween” and “Autumn” with children’s artwork displayed to reflect these themes. Each child had “My learning Journey” book which reflects the child’s activities throughout the year.
- All children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- The service embraces outdoor play and learning. Children were observed enjoying imaginative, energetic outdoor play with both their peers and staff members.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The children all sat around in groups at lunch time which created a positive atmosphere where children had the opportunity to interact and developing relationships especially the children new to the service.
- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with family photographs displayed in the care rooms which gave a sense of identity and belonging. Children and parents were greeted at drop off and collection with friendly conversation overheard.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.
- (2) A registered provider-
- (a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(b) Within the care room there were mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest, if needed.

(2)(a) The outdoor space was located to the rear of the premises and was enclosed by walls with 2 secure side gates. The surface area consisted of an artificial grass surface. A partially sheltered area permitted outdoor play in all types of weather.

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 care rooms had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys.
- Equipment in the outdoor space included a climbing snake tunnel, nature table, climbing frame, wooden playhouse, swing, digging area, small goal posts, tyres, mud kitchen, musical wall and ride on toys.

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:

On the day of inspection both the indoor and outdoor environment appeared safe. Risk assessments were conducted on a daily basis. The manager and staff members had a clear understanding of their role and range of responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children.

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 service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 24/09/2024
- (b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance record of the fire fighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms on the premises. The fire fighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 26/09/2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on 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 ensured that the service was adequately insured for 52 children at any one time attending the service. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/11/2023 to the 27/11/2024.