

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY038
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Name of Service:	Little Treasures Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Charleville View, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 XN56
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sandra Clarke
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	Not applicable
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Services Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	A Spain
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.

Description of service

Little Treasures Montessori Pre-School is a privately run sessional service in operation between the hours of 9.30am and 13.00pm in Tullamore town, Co Offaly. The service cares for children in the age range 2 to 6 years and currently cares for children in the age range 3 to 5 years. The service is attached to the registered provider's dwelling with a separate direct access door. Rooms in use include an entrance hallway, a playroom and sanitary accommodation for the children directly off the playroom. The staff member has access to sanitary accommodation in the adjoining residence. An enclosed outdoor play area is available at the back of the service.

Staffing

The service is staffed by one staff member, the registered provider. An emergency contact person is available to 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations

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- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3),(4) – Management and Recruitment.
- Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service.
- Regulation 11(1)(3)(8) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 15 (1) – Records of Pre-school child
- Regulation 16 (k) (3)– Records in relation to pre-school service.
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child.
- Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(4) – Facilities for rest and play.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First Aid.
- Regulation 26(1) (a) (b), (4) – Fire Safety Measures.
- Regulation 27 - Supervision
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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.

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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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

(b)

The designated person in charge was in the service on the arrival of the inspector and for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Two references from reputable sources were held on file in respect of the registered provider and two validated references from reputable sources were held on file in respect of the emergency contact person for the service.

(c)

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A Garda vetting disclosure was held on file in respect of the registered provider and the emergency contact person. The service was also in compliance with the Early Years Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police clearance was not required as no staff had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as an adult.

(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were conducted prior to the staff member having access to or contact with a child in attendance in the service.

(4)

The staff member working in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The inspector reviewed the policy on Healthy Eating and the policy on Accidents and Incidents. Both policies were found to be on keeping with the requirements of schedule 5 of regulation 10.

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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)
The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults cared for the children attending the sessional service.
- (3)
One adult cared for 9 children in the age range 3 to 5 years and availing of a sessional childcare service.
- (8)(c)
A second person who was familiar with the operation of the service was present in the adjoining residence and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

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;*

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- (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.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i)

The inspector reviewed six of the childrens enrolment forms held on file. The records reviewed were found to comply with the record keeping requirements of regulation 15(1)(a) to (i).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(k)

The inspector reviewed records of accident and incidents recorded between November 2025 and January 2026. The records reviewed were found to be in keeping with the policy on accidents and incidents in the service which included securing parental signatures to confirm that parents were notified of any incident involving their preschool children.

(3)

The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to inspection by the inspector on the day of inspection.

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)

Basic needs:

Children were observed to be aware of routines and daily transitions and therefore know what to expect and could prepare themselves in advance. Children were observed to be familiar with line up for handwashing before break time in the service. During break time, the staff member sat with the children who enjoyed participating in a relaxed pleasant conversation about the nocturnal animals the children had made and would like to be. Children enjoyed sandwiches, wraps, cheese, yogurts and fresh fruit including bananas with beakers of water to drink. Food provided from home settings was observed to be in keeping with the Healthy Eating policy for the service. Children were afforded time to finish their lunch at their individual pace as the remaining children relaxed in the book corner and engaged in free play in the playhouse in the room.

Children were observed to be encouraged and supported to be independent in toileting practices and were reminded to wash their hands before returning to play after toilet use and after outdoor play. Children were observed to be assisted as necessary as they secured their overalls, coats and hats for outdoor play from hooks in the room and put on their boots.

An open tent furnished with soft cushions and books was available for children to take a break from activities and to rest as required in the playroom.

Supporting relationships around children:

The name of the "helper" for the day was posted on a low-level press door in the playroom. The "helper" was observed taking great pride in doing the daily jobs which included counting the children for lunch, handing out lunch boxes to the remaining seated children, turning off the lights to talk about the nocturnal animals including bats, owls and foxes and ringing the bell to signal time to tidy up and prepare for outdoor play and time for return to the playroom following outdoor play. The staff member was observed to praise the helper and to remind the remaining eager children of the day of the week they were assigned to this role.

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The staff member in the room was observed to use gentle tones, call each child by name and get down to the children's level to talk to the children as they played in the timber playhouse in the room, on the floor mat with miniature toys on wheels and animals and with shapes used to make imaginary binoculars seated at tables.

Children, encouraged by the staff member, sang “the wheels on the bus” to facilitate line up for outdoor play. Children played with cooking utensils in the colourful outdoor timber kitchen, in the sandbox with buckets and shovels and vehicles and ran around in the grass area. The staff member moved around to groups of children engaging in conversation with the children, and both encouraged and participated in play activities. The staff member was observed to be mindful of younger children when outdoors and both guided and supported a child as requested, to draw a road with chalk on the cement surface and push the child on a trike to drive on the road. On return from energetic outdoor play, the staff member was observed to give the children time to pose questions and to answer their queries as children sat and talked about the nocturnal theme for the week, where the nocturnal animals posted on the wall lived, eat, where seen and names of their offspring. The staff member was observed to listen to the children and to answer their questions as they diverged to talk about other topics and activities included going fishing and bowling with family members.

“My Family Wall “showcased family members and activities that the children participated in at home.

A combination of daily feedback at collection time, assessment folders and learning journals were in use in the service to communicate with parents in relation to their individual children’s interests, strengths, developmental progress and any care needs. Seasonal newsletters were issued to parents to show case how children participated in festive occasions and events including shoe box day, trick or treat for sick children, easter and upcoming mother’s day.

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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-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
- (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.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The playroom had a range of toys and play equipment to support children to play individually and in small group settings. Toys and play equipment was organised in areas of interest which included home corners with a kitchen, cooking utensils, dolls and prams. Dress up clothing and a mirror was provided for pretend play. Animals, miniature toys on wheels, blocks and bricks of different sizes, shapes and dimensions were provided for construction and floor play. Jigsaws, puzzles, games, card games, connection toys were located on low level shelving and in low level boxes for children to both see and choose toys of their choice for tabletop activities. Arts and crafts materials available included pencils, colours, paint and paint brushes and scissors. The playroom was brightly decorated with the children's artwork which included painted and coloured animals, shapes, numbers, rainbows, sunflowers and handprints.

(b)

The cosy area in the service invited children to take a break from activities and rest as required. Books were provided in this area to encourage an early interest in reading.

(4)

The outdoor play area was located at the back of the premises. High level timber gates, bolted from inside on both open gable ends, guarded against both unsupervised exit of children and unauthorised access to the children when playing outdoors. A smooth concrete area provided a suitable surface for ride on toys. The grass surfaced area provided a suitable surface for the slide, climbing frame, tunnel, sea-saw which was safely anchored to the ground and balancing toys for children to walk on. The sandbox provided opportunity for messy play outdoors and

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the timber house, furnished with cooking equipment and utensils allowed children to engage in cosy home corner play in an outdoor setting.

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:

Entrance to the service was secured and a doorbell was provided to facilitate access to a hallway off the playroom. Hooks on the wall in the playroom show casing children's pictures and names ensured that bags and outdoor coats were stored off the floor in the playroom. Cleaning agents were stored in areas out of childrens reach, in a locked high level press in the bathroom and over the sink in the playroom. The outdoor play area was safely secured by high level concrete walls at the back and sides of the premises. Bins for refuse were stored in an area outside of the outdoor play, in an area not accessible to the children

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap, disposable paper towels and a foot pedal operated bin was provided in the childrens sanitary accommodation. The open window in the sanitary accommodation and in the playroom ensured a good flow of fresh air directly from outside in the premises. The playroom surfaces, play and work equipment was observed to be clean and well maintained on the day of inspection.

Outing:

The registered provider confirmed that the service did not partake in outings outside of the service.

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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 staff member trained in FAR (First Aid Responder) with an expiry date of 31 July 2027 was available to the children in attendance in the service.

(2)(a)(b)

A first-aid box was located on a high shelf in the playroom and was accessible to the staff member caring for children in attendance in the 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

(1)(a)

The service held a record of fire drills as conducted in the premises. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on 26 January 2026.

(b)

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The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment, located in the front hallway confirmed that an annual service was conducted on 1 September 2025. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system confirmed that a service was conducted on 19 September 2025.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were observed to be appropriately supervised in the playroom, while using the toilet independently, which was directly off the playroom, and while playing outdoors. Children were observed to be within sight and earshot of the staff member at all times, who was observed to offer support as necessary. For example, the staff member was observed to stand at the side of the slide to supervise children taking a turn on the slide before lining up to return indoors after outdoor play.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 11 children in daily attendance in a sessional service. Insurance cover was valid from 28 March 2025 to 27 March 2026.