

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY052
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Name of Service:	M & A's Montessori
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Address of Service:	Unit 28, Axis Business Park, Clara Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
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Eircode:	R35 R642
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Moyles
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	10.11.23 and 13.11.23
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	18
No of pre-school children:		43		28

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O' Connor Hughes
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 service is registered as a full day care service and operates between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The age range of children that the service can accommodate is 2 to 6 years of age. A sessional ECCE service operates from 09:00 to 12:00 Monday to Friday. A school aged childcare facility is provided.

The Early Years' Service is located on the ground floor of a two-storey adapted commercial premises. Four pre-school rooms namely the Garden view room, the Woodland room, the Ocean room and the Farm room.

A sleep room, a dance room, a kitchen and general-purpose room are provided on the ground floor.

An office, staff room and additional facilities are provided on the first floor.

An outdoor play area is attached to the rear and front of the premises. Onsite parking and set down facilities are available. The service is urban in its location in a business park on the outskirts of the town of Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

Staffing

Ten childcare practitioners including the deputy designated person in charge were working directly with children on the 10 November and on the 13 November 2023. The registered provider works 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 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 wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the registered provider, deputy person in charge, 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.*

(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.

(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-

- (a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and*
- (b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.*

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “

(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.”

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

The registered provider and a named person to deputise were present for the duration of the inspection.

Nineteen staff files were reviewed including the registered provider. The following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers and from a source other than a past employer in respect of the staff members.

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members and the registered provider.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of six staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The registered provider ensured that all staff were vetted prior to commencing employment in the service.

(4)

All staff members working directly with children attending the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5,6,7 or 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or an equivalent deemed by the Minister.

(6) (a)

No employee had signed a declaration on or before the 30th of June 2016 to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in a pre-school service.

(6A)

Two employees present were working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

(7)(a)

The following was available to indicate staff had received up to date training and reviewed the policies and procedures of the service;

- A signed induction checklist
- Individual training staff records
- Supervision meeting documentation.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

On the 10 November 2023 there were fifty-one children attending the service supervised directly by ten adults.

On the 13 November 2023 there were forty-three children present supervised by ten adults.

(4)(a)(b)

An adequate number of adults supervised children attending on a sessional, part time and full day care basis on both days of the inspection.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)
In a review of fifteen child enrolment records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of the children attending the service.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (h) (i) (j)and (k).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

Information was available for parents in the service in respect of Regulation 16(1) (a) to (g) in a parent handbook given to parents at the start of the pre-school term.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

A copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013)) of the Act and Regulations was available for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

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)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. Children enjoyed the various play activities moving freely in the indoor and outdoor environments supervised by staff. Children were observed to enjoy free play, tabletop activities, storytime and games in the outdoor play area. Seamless transitions were observed giving the children notice to move from one activity to another.

Children were encouraged to be independent as they washed their hands before snacks and mealtimes. Older children went to the toilet independently supervised by staff. Younger children slept in a restful atmosphere in the sleep room and were physically checked every ten minutes by staff.

Nappy changing was carried out regularly and as needed. Good communication was observed between the staff member and child during nappy changing. Spare clothes were available and children's needs were promptly attended to.

A key person system was in place to promote the emotional security of children attending the service.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Individual care plans are in place for children additional support and supervision.

Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, nappy changing, toileting and mealtimes. Staff gave positive praise to children on completion of activities.

Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

The four pre-school rooms were bright and colourful with children's artwork and posters displayed. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences to meet children's learning needs was available in the pre-school rooms. Areas of interest included a home area, dress up, construction area and farm area. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. Children were observed to relax in the cosy rest areas established in the pre-school rooms.

The service works in partnership with parents and guardians. Parents were observed to collect their children from the pre-school rooms after the ECCE session. A verbal handover was provided to parents at this time.

A parent notice board is displayed in the reception area of the service. Children's play and work activities, information updates and events are shared on a daily basis with parents via a handheld electronic device.

Each child has their own learning journal depicting their play and work activities. This journal is shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term. Staff stated the children's artwork goes home to parents on a regular basis.

Evidence indicated that the curriculum planning that supported the Early Childhood Curriculum framework was being implemented.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, sand play and home corners.

(b)

A separate sleep room was provided for children over two years of age to rest and sleep. Children were observed to sleep on low level beds with a frame and comfortable mattress.

Cosy rest areas were noted in the pre-school rooms for children to rest and relax.

(3)(a)

Both outdoor play areas were safe and secure surrounded by high level fencing. An absorbent and cement surface were noted. Toys and equipment included a play shed, low level table and chairs, a garden bench, covered sand trays, a mud kitchen, a herb and vegetable section on a mulch surface, a wooden boat and a storytime chair.

A shed was available for storage of toys and equipment.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

A menu plan was available in the service. Children’s dietary requirements were accommodated. The service provides breakfast if required, the main meal and evening snack to children attending on a full day care basis. An outside catering company provide dinners to the service on a weekly basis. Parents provide the morning snack to children attending the ECCE session. At 10:15 the snack consisted of sandwiches, yoghurt, fruit, crackers with water to drink. At approximately 13:15 the cook served the main meal of chicken casserole with mixed vegetables and mashed potato. A choice of water or milk was offered to the children. Potable water was available to children to self-serve in the pre-school rooms as required.

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 to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. Safety checklists were in place for each pre-school room.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Warm water, paper hand towel and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. The nappy changing procedure observed was carried out as per the services’ nappy changing procedure.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school rooms.

Working mechanical ventilation was noted in the sanitary accommodation and nappy changing room.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service. Medication was stored correctly in the service. The medication documentation was available and reviewed. Upon discussion, staff demonstrated their knowledge of the correct procedures of medicine administration.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in a sleep log. A staff member was observed to sit and physically check sleeping children every ten minutes in the sleep room.

The environmental temperatures recorded was 18.9 degrees Celsius.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed and a fire assembly point was noted to the side of the premises. Upon discussion with staff, it was noted that staff were familiar with the fire evacuation procedures from the service.

Outing:

The registered provider stated the service does not undertake outings.

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)
Three adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)
First aid boxes were available in the main corridor and in the Ocean and Dance rooms.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to children in 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

(1)(a)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 27 October 2023.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in July 2023.

The firefighting equipment was serviced in November 2023.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the pre-school rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2024.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(b) the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981);

Compliance Information

(b)The registered provider submitted a notification of incident form in respect of an infectious disease that had occurred in the service since the last inspection on the 29 April 2021.