

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY036
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Name of Service:	Little Acorn's Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Lismackin National School, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E53 Y589
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Name of Registered Provider:	Danielle Kiely
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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 was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. A registered school aged care service is also provided outside of the hours of the early years service. The service is operated from 8.30am to 12pm, Monday to Friday, for 38 weeks of the year. A three-hour session which is funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children operates from 8.45am to 11.45am.

The service is operated from a community hall on the grounds of Lismackin National School in a rural area outside the town of Roscrea in Co. Tipperary. The children have access to the main hall, kitchenette, an activity room and sanitary accommodation facilities. The grounds around the hall are used for outdoor play.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service supported by up to three members of staff, including staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). All staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and development.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(3)(8), 15, 20, 21, 22, 24(1), 26(1)(4) and 28

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Preschool Child

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.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

The staff files of four members of staff, including the registered provider, were assessed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the four members of staff.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of three members of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. The service had a system in place to ensure that staff were re-vetted every three years in line with best practice guidelines.

(d) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

(4) All staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 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.

(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) There were 3 staff working directly with 19 children aged between 2 years 9 months and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection. The staff and children were divided between the hall and the activity room at times, or all together in the main hall.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 adult to 7 children on the day of inspection which was greater than the minimum requirement of 1 to 11.

(8)(c) There were at least two staff present while the service was in operation.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

A sample size of 12 registration forms were assessed as part of the inspection process:

- (1) The registration forms contained the required information as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.
- (3) The registration forms were available in the service for inspection by an authorised person.

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) The children had access to both indoor and outdoor spaces on a daily basis. The main hall was set up for dining and table top activities, art, exploration, small world and imaginative play and construction at one end while the main part of the hall was kept free of equipment and materials so that it could be used for music and movement. There was a smaller room at the back of the hall that was used for small group and one to one activities. The indoor spaces were warm and cosy.

(b) Sleep facilities were not required as the children were aged over 2 years and attended for a maximum of three hours each day. There were cosy seating areas in the hall and in the activity room where the children could rest and relax when they wanted to.

(3)(a) The grounds of the school, in particular the spaces at the front and side of the hall, were available to the children for outdoor play. A new covered outdoor area and sensory garden had been developed at one side of the hall since the last inspection. This area was developed by the school and used by them as well as by the early years service. The new space was large and had a combination of concrete, gravel and grass surfaces. Paths connected the various interest areas. There was a large area covered by a roof which ensured that children could access play in the outdoors in all weathers, including the day of inspection which was cold and wet.

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 service was well furnished and equipped with a variety of toys, materials and resources suitable to the age and stage of development of the children attending.

There were child sized tables and chairs in the main hall and in the activity room as well as adult sized chairs and tables. The toys and materials were stored on open shelving units or in special interest areas such as the home corner and the art area. All of the materials were accessible to the children and organised into interest areas which made it easy for the children to see what they wanted to play with and to know where it needed to be returned to when they had finished with it.

The hall had been refurbished since the last inspection which included upgrading the internet connection. This allowed the service to install a smart television which was used for specific purposes such as to show videos related to themes of interest to the child or to play action songs that the children learned and joined in on.

The outdoor area was also well equipped. There were seating areas, natural materials, sensory materials and planting areas. Equipment such as balls and push toys were brought outside from the hall as needed.

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

The service had a healthy eating policy. Children brought food and drinks to consume during the morning. The children sat and ate together at the tables in the main hall at snack time. The children brought individual drink bottles of water or squash which they accessed independently when they wanted a drink. Foods eaten on the day of inspection included: bread rolls, sandwiches, crackers, ham slices, rice cakes, bread sticks, brown bread, chicken, yoghurt, fromage frais, fruit puree, cheese, grapes, bananas, mandarins, strawberries, pears and fruit juice.

The staff said that the service supplied a cake when it is a child's birthday. This was then shared with all of the children after they have eaten their snack.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff were responsible for recording the arrival and departure times of the children. There was a paper record available for this purpose.

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 firefighting 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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 13 November 2024.

(b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced annually, most recently on 1 August 2024 and 22 July 2024 respectively.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had current insurance for a sessional and afterschool service for up to 22 early years children and up to 40 school aged care children valid until 27 March 2025.