

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY046				
Name of Service:	Little Scholars Montessori School				
Address of Service:	Benedine, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary				
Eircode:	E45 XW77				
Name of Registered Provider:	Caitriona Meagher				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	08/05/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>39</td> <td>PM</td> <td>11</td> </tr> </table>	AM	39	PM	11
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary				
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney				
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

This full day care service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years.

A registered school aged care service was also provided.

The service operates Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. This includes a three-hour session from 9am – 12pm, Monday – Friday for 38 weeks of the year, funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is located in a residential area in the town of Nenagh in North Tipperary. The premises is a two-storey, detached building that is part residential and part purpose built childcare service. The children have access to two activity rooms: one upstairs and one downstairs, sanitary accommodation areas and a large outdoor play area at the back of the premises. The service also has a kitchen, office, storage rooms and staff room.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children in the service supported by five staff. Additional staff are available for the school aged care service. The registered provider is also responsible for food preparation and cooking.

All staff who work in the early years service hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 Management and recruitment.

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 file of the member of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 2 September 2021 was reviewed as part of the inspection process:

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

(b) Not applicable as available references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of the member of staff and relevant records were held on file.

(d) Not applicable as the member of staff had not lived outside the state.

(4) The staff in the service all worked directly with the children and held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5 or 6 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.

(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) There were 6 staff working directly with 39 children aged between 3 and 5 years. The children and staff were divided between the upstairs and downstairs room with 3 staff and 19 children aged 3 – 4 years upstairs and 3 staff with 20 children aged 4 – 5 years downstairs. In the afternoon there were 11 children and 2 staff upstairs. The downstairs room and half of the upstairs room were used by the school aged children in the afternoon. The presence of the school aged children did not have a negative impact on the adult to child ratio required for the early years children.

(4) The adult to child ratio in the morning session was maintained at 1 to 7 which was greater than the recommended minimum requirement of 1 to 11. In the afternoon, the required ratio changed to 1 to 8 for children attending on a part-time or full day care basis, the ratio available on the day of inspection was 1 to 6.

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

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.

(2) A registered provider-

(b) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that moves premises 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)(a) The children had access to two activity rooms: one upstairs and the other downstairs. Both rooms were bright and well resourced. There was direct access to sanitary accommodation areas from each room and there was a kitchenette with sink unit in each room.

The older children used the room downstairs in the morning while the younger children used the upstairs room. The upstairs room was divided into two distinct spaces by the use of a floor to ceiling perspex room divider. This ensured that there was one space for early years children and another for school aged children when both age cohorts used the upstairs room in the afternoon.

The children enjoyed daily play outdoors.

(b) A sleep room was not required in the service as all of the children were aged over two years. There were camp beds available in the storeroom upstairs, as well as blankets and sheets, for any child that wanted to sleep during the day. The camp beds were placed in the cosy area of the rooms when required. Each room had a cosy area with child sized sofas, cushions and floor mats where the children could rest and relax away from the general play area.

(2)(b) There was a large outdoor play area at the back of the premises. This space included a three-sided shelter where the children could play in all weathers. The area at the back of the outdoor area had a grass surface where the children played games including football.

The rest of the space was covered with tarmacadam. Interest areas such as the mud kitchen were sectioned off from the rest of the outdoor area by the use of wooden logs to mark the space that was then filled with bark mulch.

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 rooms were well equipped with furniture, toys and materials. The tables and chairs were available in a variety of heights to cater for the various ages of the children as well as the staff. Child height, open shelving units were used to display toys and materials in a manner that enabled the children to see what they wanted and to access it independently. They also helped to define the interest areas which included: Montessori area, home corner, cosy area, small world and construction areas and art area.

There was a storage room upstairs that was full of additional toys and materials to allow for rotation, seasonal interest and increased challenge.

The outdoor area was divided into two spaces to enable different age groups to play outside at the same time. Outdoor equipment included playhouses, mud kitchen, tables and bench seats for dining and play, ride on toys, push toys, balls and outdoor games and construction toys.

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. The children brought a packed lunch and snacks to be consumed at the morning break and at snack time in the early afternoon. Foods observed being eaten on the day of inspection included: sandwiches, wraps, rice cakes, cheese, bread rolls, fromage frais and fruit (banana, mandarin, grapes and apple).

A hot meal was served in the afternoon, between 2.45 and 3pm, to children attending on a full day care basis. A light snack was provided to children present in the service at 5pm. There was a three-week rotating menu plan for dinner and the evening snack.

Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day. The children brought drink bottles filled with water or squash that they accessed from their bags as required. The bottles were refilled with water when empty.

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 in each room maintained the attendance registers for the children under their supervision. The arrival and departure times of the children were recorded by the staff.

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 registered provider and another member of staff held current certification in first aid response (FAR) valid until 12 June 2023.

(2)(a) There was a well-stocked first aid kit available in the utility room of the service where it could be easily accessed by the staff when required.

(b) The first aid box was available if required by a child attending 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 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.

(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 was serviced on an annual basis, most recently on 12 October 2022. The smoke alarms were also serviced in 2022.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed on the walls of the activity rooms.

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 for up to 44 children at any one time valid until 27 March 2024.