

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:	01/07/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>19</td> <td>PM</td> <td>17</td> </tr> </table>	AM	19	PM	17
AM	19	PM	17		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary 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	N/A
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Description of service

This full day care service was established in 2006 to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided. The service operates Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm for 50 weeks of the year. This includes a three-hour sessional service which operates for the 38-week school year from late August until June. The sessional service, which is funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children, was not in operation on the day of inspection which took place during the summer holidays.

The service is provided from part of a two-storey residential and business premises outside the town of Nenagh in north Tipperary. The service consists of two activity rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs; sanitary accommodation areas, office, kitchen and an outdoor play area at the back of the premises. On the day of inspection the downstairs room was used by school age children while the upstairs room was used by the pre-school children. The outdoor play area was divided so that each group could have their own space.

Staffing

The registered provider was not present for the inspection so her deputy was the person in charge on the day of inspection. There were three staff working directly with the pre-school children. Additional staff who worked directly with the school age children were also present in 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/ 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)(2)(8), 15(1)(3), 16(1)(3), 19(1)(b) and 23.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Pre-School 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 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

(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 one member of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 8 May 2023 was reviewed as part of the inspection process. The garda vetting documents of the registered provider and three other members of staff who work with the pre-school children were also reviewed:

(2)(a) Two written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of one member of staff.

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

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of the five members of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. In the case of two staff members, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Not applicable as the member of staff had not lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

(4) All staff who worked with the pre-school children 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.

(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.

(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 3 staff working directly with 19 children aged between 3 and 6 years old attending on a sessional, part-time or full day care basis on the morning of the inspection. By 12pm there were 17 children and 3 staff present.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the requirements for the duration of the inspection.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service while it 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-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 10 completed registration forms were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

The registration forms contained the required information as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.

(3)(c) The records were available on the premises and open to inspection by an authorised person.

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;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (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.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The service had all of the records required in relation to the pre-school service as detailed under parts (a) to (k) of this regulation.

(3) The records and documents were available on the premises and open to inspection by an authorised person.

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-*
 - (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

(1)(b) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children:

The staff supported the children to become independent with self-care skills such as using the toilet, washing their hands, dressing for the outdoors, packing and unpacking their bags but quickly intervened without fuss when

children needed extra help, such as cleaning up after spilling a yoghurt. Staff were observed to prompt children with regard to good hygiene practices such as hand washing after using the toilet, after using a tissue, after messy play and before eating.

The children were given freedom of choice both indoors and outdoors. The spaces were set up with clearly defined interest areas which supported the children's self-directed learning and exploration. There were also special interest activities which the children could engage in and staff available to support them as needed, such as the craft activity on the day of inspection where the children made wearable animal masks.

Staff had a safe system for moving with the children between the upstairs room and the outdoor area: one staff went at the front of the line and one at the back, children used handrails on the stairs, all waited at bottom of stairs and staff checked they had all children before they opened the door. When outside, the children lined up against the wall, staff checked again that all children were present then all walked to the gate into the outdoor play area.

The staff were observed to be available to the children, to work with them and respond to their needs with enthusiasm, patience and kindness. Staff supervised the children, especially in the outdoors, to support and maintain their safety while engaging in exciting or risky play such as climbing, sliding and using ride-on vehicles.

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 front door of the premises was secured with an electronic locking system which prevented unauthorised access to the service.

The stairwell was well lit with natural light through windows, supplemented with artificial light when required.

There was a non-slip vinyl covering on the steps of the stairs and two sets of handrails, one at standard height for adults and a lower one for the children.

There was soft fall matting under all climbing equipment.

Warm water for hand washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C. On the day of inspection, the warm water was 39°C.

Infection control:

The service had an infection control policy, including hand washing. Hand washing facilities were located in the sanitary accommodation areas adjacent to the activity rooms which facilitated easy access by the children and supervision by the staff.

Posters showing photos of the correct way to sneeze and cough were displayed at the children's eye level beside the hygiene station containing tissues and wet wipes for the children to use when needed.

Administration of medication:

The service had a policy for the administration of medications to children attending the service. Signed parental consent was sought prior to any medication being given to a child.

Fire Safety:

Fire escape routes were kept free of obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. The garda vetting for two members of staff was last done in 2021 which exceeded the three-year renewal requirements of Tusla. The service did not have a system in place to ensure that garda vetting was renewed on a three-yearly basis.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The two staff members have obtained Garda vetted. The service has now reviewed all Garda vetting from staff and have written down the dates they expire and when they need to be re-vetted.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the updated Garda vetting for two members of staff were reviewed by the early years inspector on 24 September 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.