

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015WD044

Name of Service: Little Explorers Montessori School

Address of Service: 24 Garranmore, Dunmore Road, Waterford, Co. Waterford

Eircode: X91WVR4

Name of Registered Provider: Jenny Corcoran

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 17/11/2023

No of pre-school children: AM 49 PM 21

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency,
Ely Hospital,
Wexford.

Inspection undertaken by: E Mc Garry

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

Description of service

This sessional service is in a housing estate on the outskirts of Waterford city. A service is provided to children aged between 2 and 6 years. The service is also registered to provide a school age service. The service provides an Early Years Care and Education programme (ECCE) from 09:00 to 12:00 hours for 38 weeks of the year. The premises is a detached two storey house with three preschool rooms, toilets, hallway, kitchen and an outdoor area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There were seven employed in the service including the registered provider who also works directly with the children. There were seven staff present on the day of inspection. All staff held the minimum of level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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:

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4),

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),

Regulation 19 Health, Welfare, and Development of the Child (1) (a),

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,
Regulation 25 First aid (1) (2) (a) (b),
Regulation 26 Fire Safety (1) (a) (b) (4).

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.

Additional Information

The registered provider was found to be operating outside their registered status on the day of inspection. The service is registered to provide a sessional service and was found to be operating a part time service on the day of inspection. At 13:15hrs there were 12 preschool children in the service in the care of 4 staff. The registration office was informed.

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 II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C (2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider had failed to inform the registration office that it had reverted to providing a part time early years service to children following the Covid -19 pandemic.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider completed a change in circumstance application following the inspection. The application to provide a part time service has been approved and the service is now registered to provide a sessional and part time service.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence received is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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,*

(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

Following a review of documentation and discussion with the registered provider it was established by the inspector that there were seven staff employed in the service. All staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

1(a)(b)

The registered provider was the designated person in charge and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)

There were ten written references available from previous employers. Of these eight were validated.

(b)

There were four written and validated references available from reputable sources.

(c)

There were Garda vetting disclosures available for the staff members working in the service.

(d)

Police vetting was available for three staff members who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

All staff held the minimum of level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Non-Compliance Information

(b)

There was one staff member who had two written references on file in the service which were not validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

There are now two validated references available on file in the service for the staff member. The registered provider will ensure there are two written and validated references available on file in the service for all staff members prior to starting work in the service.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence received is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)

There were at all times an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the preschool service on the day of inspection.

(3)

At 10:30hrs

Triona and Sarah's room.

There were 20 children aged between 3 and 6 years cared for by 2 staff.

At 10:35hrs

Sharon's room

There were 8 children aged between 3 and 6 years cared for by 1 staff.

At 10:40hrs

Upstairs room

There were 21 children aged between 3 and 6 years directly cared for by 3 staff.

At 13:15hrs

There were 12 children aged from 3 to 6 years in the care of 4 staff in Triona and Sarah's room.

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)

The registered provider ensured that each child's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service. Children were engaged in a variety of appropriate activities during the inspection. Children were observed engaged with various tabletop activities on arrival by the inspector. Children were polishing small containers, threading and making necklaces, learning about opposing forces by playing with magnets and sitting on comfortable mats on the floor placing and building blocks. The inspector observed that each child was occupied and stimulated by the activity which the staff had facilitated for them. There was a supply of well-maintained Montessori toys and equipment for the children. There was a library area to the side of Triona's room. It was observed to be a cosy restful area for the children and was well resourced with a supply of books for the children to look at.

Children were observed by the inspector during the morning snack time. Children were supported with hand washing before their snack. Staff sat and chatted to them making it a sociable and relaxing time for the children. When the morning snack time was over the children washed their plates and cups in pretend washing up bowls, kept in each of the preschool rooms. Staff who spoke to the inspector explained this practical life exercise was to encourage children to take responsibility for their own care needs.

All plates and cups used by the children were washed by the staff in the dishwasher in the kitchen later on in the morning. Children who were attending on a part time basis were given an extra snack after the children who were attending on a sessional basis had gone home.

There was a curriculum in place and a weekly lesson plan evident in each preschool room. For example, in Sharon's room one of the themes was "All about winter". The children were observed practicing for their Christmas concert. Staff were observed encouraging all the children particularly children who were shy to be included and supported them to say their lines. Children were all given a set of bells so that even children who were shy could partake in the rehearsal.

Children were observed during circle time. Children were observed to be excited and engaged with the various topics up for discussion on the day of inspection. For example, children gave 17 loud claps to demonstrate the date of the month. There was a conversation all about the famous explorer Tom Crean from Co Kerry. One child was heard to say, "That's where I went on my holidays". There was also a conversation during circle time about how we should look after the birds during the winter, and the need for people to put out bird feeders to keep small birds alive in cold weather. Staff were observed to be skilled in keeping the children's interest in the topics discussed.

The service had the use of a secure outdoor play area to the rear. This area was safe, suitable and secure. Children were observed enjoying free play in the outdoor area on the morning of the inspection. There was a shed, a slide and various balls and toys for children to play with. There was a sheltered outdoor classroom in the area where children could play if it was raining. The day of the inspection was particularly cold. Children were observed to be wrapped up warmly in coats and hats by the staff who were caring for them. Staff were observed constantly engaged with the children in the outdoor area. Staff who spoke to the inspector said they liked to facilitate as much outdoor play as possible for the enjoyment of the children.

There was a relaxed and calm atmosphere observed in the service on the day of inspection. Staff were observed to be warm and kind to the children in their care for example, one child who was unsettled was given the choice of continuing with an activity they were enjoying while the rest of the children moved on to another activity. Staff who spoke to the inspector were aware of the child's mood on the day of inspection and gave extra care and attention to ensure the child was supported in the service.

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

The registered provider had taken the following steps to ensure the safety of the children attending the service.

General safety:

Access to the service was gained through the front door which was secured on arrival. There was a call bell system in place where parents rang the bell to gain access to the service. The outdoor play area was safe, suitable and secure.

Infection control:

The service appeared to be clean on the day of inspection. Cleaning templates were available throughout the service to document the regular cleaning of the preschool rooms and toilet areas. There were fridges available in the service to store the perishable food provided by the parents for the children. All sinks for hand washing in the service were equipped with warm thermostatically controlled water, liquid soap, and foot operated pedal bins.

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)
There was a person trained in first aid for children immediately available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position on the premises which was available to the children attending the preschool 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 template in place to record any fire drill that takes place in the service. The last fire drill taken place in the service was recorded in November 2023.

(b)

There was a record available on file stating the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm was last serviced in March 2023.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the main entrance of the

Non-Compliance Information

There was no record of the annual maintenance of the smoke alarm in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider will ensure the annual maintenance of the smoke alarm is maintained at all times. The annual maintenance of the smoke alarm in the service was carried out in December 2023. The inspector received a certificate stating the fire alarms were last maintained in December 2023.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence received is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.