

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD086		
Name of Service:	The Little School of Montessori		
Address of Service:	4, Clonea Road, Abbeyside, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford		
Eircode:	X35 C597		
Name of Registered Provider:	Catriona Cullinan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	13/03/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM 8
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Waterford Community Services Cork Road Waterford		
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ryan		
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

The Little School of Montessori is a privately owned and managed pre-school service. The premises is a detached single story modified commercial building that has one large pre-school room, an office, rest room, kitchenette and suitable sanitary accommodation for staff and children. The service presently offers two sessions for the Early Childcare and Education Scheme (ECCE) from 08:45hrs to 12:15hrs and 12:30hrs to 15:30hrs Monday to Friday for children aged 2 years 8 months to 6 years of age.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner manager and part of the staff compliment. The service employs three additional childcare workers.

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 announced/unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety The inspection focused on the following regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 25 - First aid

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, 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.

(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

There were two staff working directly with the children present on the day of inspection and one of these staff was the registered provider.

- (1)
 - (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge. The service also had a named person who was able to deputise as required.
 - (b) At all times during the inspection the registered provider was on the premises.

(2)

Since the last inspection on the 12 May 2021 and on review of the staff files, it was evident that one new staff member was employed to work with the children in the service. The files of the other staff had been reviewed and found compliant on previous inspections.

(a) Two written past employee references were available in respect of the new staff member working in the service, with recorded validations of each reference.

(b) Not applicable as employee references from a reputable source were not required.

(c) There was evidence of completed Garda vetting disclosure certificates from An Garda Síochána on file for the new staff member. The other staff working directly with the children had Garda vetting re-applied for in the last three years.

(d) Not applicable as Police vetting certificates were not required.

(4)

There was evidence that all staff employed to work directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 6, and 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. There was evidence of continuous professional development and qualification certificates on file.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(2)

In the morning session there were 19 children aged 3 to 5 years of age being cared for by 2 staff. In the afternoon session on the day of the inspection there were 8 children aged 2 years 10 months to 5 years of age being cared for by 2 staff.

(3)

The staff: child ratios exceeded the requirements for sessional care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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) Regulation 19 was assessed through direct observation, review of records and discussion with staff. The following was observed and explained in relation to the provision of the programme of care and activities for the children attending the service.

On arrival at the service the inspector was warmly greeted. The atmosphere was relaxed, homely and the children were observed to be comfortable in their surroundings. The setting was a well maintained rectangular shaped room with sufficient space for the children to move about the well-defined areas of interest. There were various pictorial wall displays such as, the daily routine, daily weather charts and children’s timeline photographs were at children’s eye level.

The registered provider informed the inspector that the programme for the service was play based while underpinned by the Montessori method of early childhood care and education. The pre-school had two sessions, morning and afternoon. It was documented in the service’s mission statement that the ethos of the service was “to provide an ordered and secure environment prepared to meet the individual and group needs of children in our care while ensuring that each child is emotionally satisfied and well stimulated”.

Children in the morning session were observed using the extensive range of Montessori equipment with activities available and accessible to them on low level open shelving units. Children gathered around their tables doing practical life and sensorial activities while the staff who sat with them encouraged conversations about the texture and colour of these materials.

Another small group were deeply engaged in floor play with a variety of blocks and open-ended play materials such as magnetic bricks and plastic bricks, children were observed to be comfortable in these surroundings helping each other out with these activities.

In the afternoon session children were observed gradually arriving at the service and the registered provider greeted each child warmly. Each child routinely hung up their coats and independently changed into their indoor shoes on arrival. There was ample space in the cloakroom provided for children's storage of bags, coats, outdoor clothing and indoor and outdoor footwear. The hangers and shoe cubbies were labelled and distinguishable by the child's name and photograph.

At the lunch time children were firstly encouraged to carry out hand washing. Each child had their own table mat with their name. One child was nominated to distribute the table mats in accordance with the alphabetical order of their name. After lunch children chose the activity of their interest. A small group of children were busy cutting and pasting in preparation for their Easter crafts. The registered provider demonstrated the St. Patricks day displays of shamrock streamers and flags made by the children. These were being carefully minded for the children to bring home for the forth coming St Patricks weekend holiday.

On the day of the inspection there was exceptionally heavy rain and the children had chosen not to use the adjacent outdoor garden. The outdoor area extended into a long garden to the rear of the service. This included a colourful and stylish covered shelter, a swing bridge under earth tunnel, a well-stocked mud kitchen, raised beds for planting and seven apple trees that were planted by parents in recent years, these were thriving and had started to blossom. The registered provider noted that these trees worked well for shade in the summer period. The registered provider explained that the children would normally spend a considerable amount of their time in this garden.

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 documentation available to verify that two staff had current first aid responder training FAR, and one staff member was rostered to be available at all times during the service hours.

(2)

(a) There was a suitably equipped wall mounted first aid bag in the service.

(b) The first aid bag was suitably accessible and available in the pre-school room.