

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH045
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Name of Service:	Sonas Montessori pre-school
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Address of Service:	13 Assumption Villas, Delvin Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N91 RY27
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Name of Registered Provider:	Julie Shaw, Ruth English
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan
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).

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Description of service

Sonas Montessori pre-school registered as a sessional service catering for up to 38 children in Mullingar. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates two sessions between the hours of 9:00 am - 12:00 hrs and 12:00 – 15:00 hours.

The service is located in an adapted domestic dwelling consisting of three pre-school rooms. There is an outdoor play area located to the rear of the service which includes a sheltered outdoor play area.

Staffing

Eight adults including the registered providers are employed in the service. Seven adults were working directly with the children and held qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications. An adult employed as an administrator was present also.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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 -

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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 providers, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider it was determined that three adults had been employed since the previous inspection. Three staff records were reviewed.

(2)

(a) (b) Two written validated references were available from past employers or sources other than a previous employer in respect of three adults whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for three staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. An in date garda vetting disclosure was available for three staff members which required renewal since the last inspection on 22 May 2024.

(d) Not applicable, as no adult had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Three adults working directly with the children held qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Qualifications Framework.

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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) There were twenty eight children attending the service being supervised directly by seven staff members during the inspection.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to on the day of the inspection.

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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 entrance door to the premises was secured and managed by the staff to ensure the safety of the children within. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

The staff members were aware of the potential choking risks that grapes posed when asked by the inspector. They advised they were very observant of any food provided that had the potential risk of choking and immediately removed or cut the food into smaller pieces. They also advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if they observed that a child was wearing one.

There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed daily to ensure a safe play and work environment for the children and staff. They were reviewed by the registered providers to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled warm running water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. The staff were observed washing their hands also. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication in the service including recording of same. Medicine was safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

There was a rest area in each care room.

Fire Safety:

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Monthly fire drills had been carried out, and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. Fire assembly signage was in place in the outdoor area at the front of the service.

Outing:

The registered providers stated that outings are conducted and an outings policy is in place to guide practice.

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.
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) no person other than-
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,
 - (iii) an employee, or
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered providers ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a), (b) The registered providers ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained. The inspector's visit to the service was documented in the visitor's book on arrival.
- (4) The registered providers confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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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) Two staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the service.
 - (b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children in the two care rooms 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) A written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 21 April 2026.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced in July 2025, and the smoke alarm was serviced on 9 April 2026.
- (4) Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were observed being supervised throughout the inspection by the staff caring for them in their care rooms, in the sanitary areas, during the various transitions and in the outdoor area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date was noted to be 27 March 2027.