

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015WW096
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Mini Hands Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Kilmacanogue National School, Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A98 D602
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Isabel Costello
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	12/02/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	21	PM	N/A
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Dublin 8.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S. Early O'Brien
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

Mini Hands Montessori is located in a pre-fabricated building in the grounds of Kilmacanogue National School. The service provides part-time day care and a sessional service to pre-school children who are presently aged between 2 years and 5 years of age. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 09:15 and 13:45.

### Staffing

There are three adults employed to care for the pre-school children and this includes the registered provider. On the day of inspection three adults provided direct care to twenty-one pre-school children.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(4) - Management and recruitment,

Regulation 11 (1)(3) - Staffing levels,

Regulation 16(1)(h)(i)(j)(k) – Record in Relation to a Pre-School Service,

Regulation 19 (1)(a)(b) - Health, welfare and development of child,

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures,  
Regulation 28 - Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16(1)– Record in Relation to a Pre-School Service.

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

An Immediate Action Notice was issued on 12 February 2026 for non-compliance with Regulation 23. This was issued in relation to a child attending the service who requires emergency medication. There was no detailed care plan available and no clearly labelled medication stored in the service in its original packaging available as required in the event of a medical emergency.

The registered provider submitted a response on 13 February 2026 which should address the risk identified on inspection.

## 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

(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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider is the designated person in charge of the service and there is a named person appointed to deputise as required.
  - (b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived on the morning of the inspection in addition to two other staff members.
- (2)
- Following a discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that one new member of staff was employed in the service since the last inspection on 07 March 2024.
- Documentation was reviewed in respect of this adult as follows:

(a)(b) Two validated references were available, both from a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for three staff members including the registered provider. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) There was no evidence to suggest that a staff member had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months as an adult.

(4)  
Documentary evidence was available to confirm that all staff members had 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.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)  
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)  
The minimum ratio of adults to children for part-time services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. On the day of inspection there were 21 children attending the service being supervised by 3 adults.

### 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:*

- (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.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) Children’s attendance was recorded in a hardcopy book with the arrival and departure times of each child recorded daily.
- (i) A staff roster was available and detailed the names of all staff working in the service on the day of inspection.
- (j) There was no evidence of administration of medication to a child.
- (k) There was no evidence that accidents or incidents had taken place in the service since the last inspection.

### 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)

#### **Basic Needs**

Children’s care needs were observed to be met promptly in the service. Staff were observed engaging warmly with children when providing this care. Children were encouraged and supported to be independent including cleaning up after their play and meals.

Healthy eating was promoted in the service and staff reported that all snacks are provided by the parents of the children. Drinking water was accessible to children throughout the day and all children were given water with their snack. Children were encouraged to feed themselves and staff supported children who needed assistance. Children appeared happy and content within the care room.

### **Supporting Relationships**

Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff interacted warmly with the children throughout the inspection and were observed supporting children in their play. Staff were observed to use encouragement, gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children's independence during play and mealtimes.

Staff described how they record information about each child's learning and development and how this is shared with parents.

### **Physical and Material Environment**

The care room was arranged to provide a range of play materials supporting children with the freedom to play and explore. Areas of interest included small world toys, construction toys, jigsaws, books, and a play kitchen. The care rooms provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and were adequately resourced with a variety of materials.

The environment was laid out to support the children's independence. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care rooms. Children had access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area located immediately outside, to the rear of the care room. Children were observed playing in this space on the day of inspection. This is a large, natural play space with adequate resources that were age and stage appropriate. On the day of inspection, children were adequately dressed in coats, hats and gloves.

### **Programme of Activities**

Children were observed to make choices on their own play materials within the environment. Their learning and development were supported by the staff in the use of open-ended questions. Children appeared to be familiar with, and handled, transitions between activities naturally. Children were aware of their leadership roles on the day, such as helping to distribute water bottles and snack.

Positive language was observed to be used across the staff team and with the children. Children shared their stories and ideas with the adults regularly and these were responded to. Language development was supported in discussions between the adults and the children, observed both in play and at snack time.

### 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 leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children in the indoor and outdoor areas on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.
- The registered provider had taken measures to ensure the indoor and outdoor play environments were safe and free from hazards.
- Medication, which is only administered in an emergency, was stored safely and out of the reach of children.
- Storage facilities for hazardous cleaning materials were inaccessible to children.

##### Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate handwashing for staff and children in the sanitary area adjacent to the care room.
- Good hand-washing practices were observed after toileting, before eating and when returning indoors from play.
- Foot pedal bins were available throughout the service for the safe disposal of used hand towels and other waste products.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned before and after snack time.
- Perishable food items were stored in the refrigerator as required.

##### Administration of Medication:

- The service had an administration of medication policy in place. Medication has not been given to date in the service. An adequate medication record was available to document medication given should this be

required in an emergency. All staff were familiar with the procedures outlined in the medication policy. Anti-febrile medication was available, in date and stored out of the reach of children.

### Fire Safety:

- On the day of inspection, all emergency exits were observed to be clearly identifiable and were not obstructed.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. During snack time, the inspector observed that a child had whole grapes in their lunchbox which posed a choking hazard to the child. It is acknowledged that the staff member cut these for the child when it was brought to their attention by the inspector.
2. A wooden frame containing a sink for children to play with in the outdoor area was broken and had jagged pieces of wood which poses a safety risk to children.

#### Infection Control:

3. In the sanitary area adjacent to the care room, paper towels for hand-drying were placed loosely in a basket beside the handbasin. This poses a risk of cross infection and cross contamination for staff and children.

#### Administration of Medication:

4. An Immediate Action Notice was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection, 12 February 2026, as a detailed care plan and emergency medication required for one child was not immediately available in the service. This posed a risk to the health and safety of the children concerned.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. Following the inspection, a message was sent to parents to remind them that grapes are a choking hazard if given to a child whole and they have been asked that grapes be cut length ways and in quarters. A photograph of how the grapes should be cut was provided with the message to assist with their understanding. All staff are responsible to check lunchboxes for whole grapes in the future.
2. The wooden frame at the outdoor sink has now been removed and a concrete surround is now in place. In future all staff will report any equipment that is damaged and a weekly review will be undertaken to review all equipment.

### Infection Control:

3. The basket containing the tissues for hand drying has been removed from the sanitary area and replaced with an enclosed holder containing paper towels. This will be used going forward and children have been shown how to remove the paper towels for use after handwashing.

### Administration of Medication:

4. A response to the Immediate Action Notice issued on 12 February 2026 was submitted to the inspector on the 13 February 2026 which addressed the fact that emergency medication and a detailed care plan were unavailable for a child who required this. The medication is now stored in the service and is in date as required. A care plan has been updated and this new template will be used in the future. The deputy manager has been assigned responsibility to ensure that everything is in place for children requiring emergency medication in the future.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Photographic evidence in relation to 1 and 2 above.

#### Infection Control:

Photographic evidence.

#### Administration of Medication:

Photographic evidence.

### Summary Comment

The corrective actions as stated by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances. The Regulatory requirement has been met and will inform the next inspection.

## 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 fire fighting 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 evidence of regular fire drills having taken place within the service. The last fire drill took place on 29 January 2026.

(b)

There was a maintenance record of the firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the premises dated January 2026 and February 2026 respectively.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire, displayed within the Montessori room and the main hallway of the building.

## 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 a valid certificate of insurance which expires on 27 March 2026 for a part-time service with afterschool which covers a maximum of 23 preschool children and 20 school age children.