

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX003		
Name of Service:	Abacus Montessori School		
Address of Service:	11 The Faythe, Wexford, Co. Wexford		
Eircode:	Y35 WTES		
Name of Registered Provider:	Kathryn Goff		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	14/01/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM NA
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspector Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford		
Inspection undertaken by:	S Early O'Brien & C Ryan		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
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

Abacus Montessori School is a privately operated early year service which opened in 2004. It is located in Wexford town. It offers a Montessori programme to children aged between 2 years and 6 years of age. The service operates a sessional service 5 mornings per week and can accommodate 33 children at any one time.

Staffing

The service employs eight staff including the registered provider and deputy manager to work in the service. The registered provider and the deputy manager are on the premises daily. All the staff working directly with children in the service held the minimum of level 5 and above qualifications in Childcare and Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

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

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2)

Regulation 20 Facilities for Rest and Play (1)(a)(b)

Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials,

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) and
Regulation 28 Insurance.

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 inspectors wish 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

(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 was the designated person in charge and a named deputy designated person in charge who was able to deputise, as required. The registered provider was present on the day of inspection and was rostered to work with the children.

(b)

The person in charge confirmed that they or their deputy are always present while the service is open.

(2)

Documentation was reviewed in respect of the eight staff working in the service. This documentation met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b)

Two validated references were available on file for all eight of the staff members.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available on file for all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every 3 years in all cases.

(d)

Police vetting disclosures were not required as there was no evidence that any staff member had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4)

Certificates of qualification for all eight staff members who work directly with children were available on file demonstrating that they held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Qualification Framework or 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.

(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)

On the day of inspection, it was observed that there were adequate staffing levels to respond to the needs of the children present.

(3)

On the morning of inspection, ratios were observed as follows:

The playroom downstairs was subdivided into two parts and there were 13 children being cared for by 5 staff members and all children were aged between 3 and 4 years.

The upstairs playroom had 6 children being cared for by 3 staff with all children aged between 3 and 5 years.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

All of the children in the service attend for 3 hours in the morning and during that time on the day of inspection the children had access to both indoor and outdoor spaces to play in and explore.

The indoor environment consisted of two playrooms: one upstairs and one downstairs, sanitary accommodation and a kitchen. The playroom in the downstairs area was divided to allow for two separate pods. Each room had visual displays for children of the daily routine, photographs to indicate storage of children’s own belongings such as coats and bags, displays of photographs, posters and items of interest. The rooms were bright and warm. Children had access to an outdoor play area located to the rear of the service. This was well resourced with a variety of toys for the children to use. The area had an all-weather soft surface and included a slide, sand-tray, kitchen, blackboard, ride on toys, boxes of toys and storage. The children enjoyed daily outdoor play with each room rotating their times outside so as not to overlap.

(b) Sleep facilities were not required as all children were aged over 3 years and all attended for 3 hours each day. The children could rest and relax in their room when they wanted. Children in the upstairs room had a cosy corner that consisted of an armchair, mat and soft cushions.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service consisted of two playrooms, one large room on the ground floor and the second smaller room upstairs. The large room downstairs was divided into two smaller spaces to facilitate small group work between the children and staff with both areas set up in a similar style. The tables and chairs in both rooms were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children using them.

There was a sufficient quantity of materials for the number of children attending which were available on low level shelving and observed to be easily accessible to the children. Additional resources and equipment were also available on higher level shelving and in cupboards in each of the rooms. The presence of a family wall display and children’s artwork on display at the children’s level, demonstrated a sense of identity and belonging for the children.

The downstairs room included specialised equipment to support the Montessori ethos, jigsaws, floor play toys, small world houses and garages with people, cars, tractors and animals provided opportunities for solitary and group play opportunities. Construction toys, and sensory toys were among the large array of materials available in each of the care rooms. The play equipment and materials were observed to be durable and easy to clean.

The upstairs room was well resourced with interest areas. The children’s art station was set up with paint, glue, crayons, templates, glitter, and brushes. A cosy area located in the corner consisted of two child sized armchairs, mats, cushions, books and a sensory basket. There was a home corner, farm toys and Montessori materials.

Throughout the room there was evidence of the children’s interest. For example, a height chart made with photos of the children and ribbons was stuck on the door that included a photo and ribbon for an emperor penguin which the children were interested in. Staff supported children with managing their feelings and a happy sad chart with their faces was located in the room where children could choose to show how they felt on arrival daily. Transitions between the activities during the morning were smooth and relaxed, with plenty of chatting and conversations between the children and staff.

The outdoor area and the equipment and materials available provided appropriate learning opportunities for the children based on their age and stage of development. On the day of inspection, the children from each pod were afforded the opportunity to play outdoors and were adequately dressed in warm jackets, hats and gloves. They were observed to have autonomy in leading their play choices without the direction of the staff.

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 with a buzzer system to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. The kitchen and storage facilities for hazardous cleaning materials were inaccessible to children. Accident and incident reports reviewed were maintained in line with the service policy.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap, and paper towels were available to facilitate hygienic handwashing for both staff and children. Lunch boxes that included perishable food items were stored in the fridges in the care rooms in line with safe food guidance. Good hand washing practices were observed after toileting and returning indoors from outdoor play time.

Administration of Medication:

Staff adequately detailed the procedures for administering medication if required during discussions with the inspectors. On the day of inspection, no child required medication.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

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)
Three staff members held the appropriate First Aid Responder (FAR) certification, ensuring that a person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times.
- (2)(a)(b)
There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position available for use

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)
Records were available demonstrating that fire drills take place monthly. The last recorded fire drill was documented as having been carried out on 9 December 2024.
- (b)
A record was maintained of when the fire detection system and smoke alarms were last serviced in January 2025. Firefighting equipment records were available demonstrating that these were last serviced in September 2024.
- (4)
Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous places throughout the service.

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 for a Montessori service for 33 children