

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015WX069 |
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| Name of Service: | Little Acorns Montessori |
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| Address of Service: | Ensicorthy Road, Ferns, Co. Wexford |
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| Eircode: | Y21 NY58 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Jennifer Doyle |
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| Service type: | Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 24/10/2024 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 11 | PM | N/A |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|

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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Tusla Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, 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).

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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable |
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Description of service

This sessional service is registered to provide an early years care and education programme to children aged from 2 to 6 years of age. It is privately owned and managed. It is situated on the outskirts of the village of Ferns to the rear of an office building. The service consists of a preschool room, a toilet, a hall way and a large outdoor play area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are three staff working in the service. All staff held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework

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 the following regulations:

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

Regulation 10 Policies and Procedures,

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,
Regulation 25 First aid (1) (2) (a) (b),
Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures,
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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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)(b)

There was a person in charge on the day of the inspection and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider arrived later on the morning of the inspection and was also available to facilitate the inspection.

(2)

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

(a)(b)

There were six written and validated references available for the staff working in the service.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all staff members.

(4)
All staff held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework

Non-Compliance Information

(d)
Police vetting was available for one staff member who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months however the police vetting was not translated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The police vetting has been translated and is now available on file in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the translated police vetting was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Non-Compliance Information

There were no copies of the policies and procedures in place in the service available on the day of inspection, in either written or electronic form. Preschool services are required to have copies of the policies and procedures in place in the service for review by parents and the staff who are working in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The policies in place in the service have been printed and are now available in hard copy in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photo of the hard copy of policies now in place in the service was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)
There was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the preschool service for the duration of the inspection.

(3)

At 11.00am.

There were 11 children aged 2 to 6 years of age in the care of 2 staff. The registered provider arrived later the morning of the inspection and was available to assist with the inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

There was a registration form available in respect of each child enrolled in the service. A sample of 10 forms completed by parents was reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

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)

The preschool room had been developed to allow for the free play and education of the children attending the service. Areas of interest had been developed with thought and care. For example, there was a large blackboard which had chalk for the children to draw on. There was a collage of the children's photographs. There was also a collage of the children's hand prints entitled "small hands change the world". There was a plentiful supply of art materials for the children to use.

On the day of inspection children were observed making prints with paint and circular cardboard shapes. There were child sized tables and chairs suitable for tabletop activities. There was sufficient space for children and staff to move around and enjoy various activities and play. Open shelving units allowed children to freely access what they wanted to choose to play with. There was original artwork displayed on the walls. The children had made a collage of a large black pot for Halloween.

There was a supply of Montessori equipment easily accessible to the children. There was a variety of toys provided including books, jigsaws, small cars and plastic bricks. There was a large outdoor area to the rear of the service. This consisted of a mixture of grass and concrete for children to play on. The area was safe, suitable and secure.

Non-Compliance Information

There was no rest area in the room for children to rest on during the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A rest area consisting of bean bags and blankets has been reinstated in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence received.

Summary Comment

The response is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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 manager took the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the preschool children attending the service:

GENERAL SAFETY

All cleaning agents were stored in a safe and secure area which was inaccessible to children. The outdoor area was safe, suitable and secure with a fence and gates which could be secured.

INFECTION CONTROL

The service appeared to be clean. There was liquid soap and disposable hand towels available in the service. Good hand washing practice was observed on the day of inspection. Children were observed washing their hands after using the toilet. All perishable items were stored in the fridge.

Non-Compliance Information

1.
The entrance door was open on arrival. The door was checked again during the inspection and remained unsecured for the duration of the inspection. This posed a risk to children leaving the service unsupervised.
2.
The nappy changing mat was ripped, worn and needed to be replaced. The mat was stored on the floor of the toilet in use by the children and posed a risk of cross infection in the service.
3.
There were outdoor clothes and wellies in use by the children stored on the floor of the toilet. This practice posed a risk of cross infection in the service.

4.

The bin in the toilet area used for disposing of handtowels was a flip top bin and was not pedal operated which caused a risk of cross infection in the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1.

The door is now kept locked when the service is in operation. The key is safely stored close by to ensure it can be opened in case of emergency.

2.

The nappy changing mat has been discarded. The wall mounted unit is primarily used when changing nappies in the service now.

3.

The clothes and wellies are stored in a large, lidded box in the cloak room now.

4.

The bin has been replaced with a pedal operated bin.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.

A photo of the door and key storage was received by the inspector.

2.

No evidence.

3.

A photo of the large, lidded bin was received by the inspector.

4.

A photo of the pedal bin in use in the toilet area was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

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.

Non-Compliance Information

1.

There was no evidence available in the service that there was a person trained in a First Aid Responder Course available to the children on the day of inspection. It is a requirement that children have access to a person trained in a first aid responder course when attending preschool services. It is acknowledged there was one person trained in another type of first aid in the service on the day of inspection.

2.

The first aid box was not suitably equipped and was not easily accessible to the preschool children. There were no plasters or sterile water in the box and staff took several minutes to locate the box when requested by the inspector.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. There is a person trained in a First Aid Responder Course available to the children attending the service now.

2.

The first aid box has been restocked and is now stored on the shelf in the classroom.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. A copy of a certificate in a First Aid Responder course for one staff member was received by the inspector.

2.

A photo of the first aid box which has been restocked was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

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

- (4)
There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in the hallway of the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a)
There was no evidence that regular fire drills were carried out in the service. The last fire drill was carried out in the service in December 2023.
- (b)
There was no maintenance record demonstrating the fire alarm in the service had been maintained. The absence of monthly fire drills was noted on the last inspection on 16 June 2021. Following this inspection the registered provider submitted a corrective and preventative response to the inspectorate. Despite this submission the action proposed did not prevent the recurrence of the non-compliance on this inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(a)
There is a hard copy of a template to record monthly fire drills now in place in the service.
- (b)
The annual maintenance of the fire alarm in place in the service was carried out on 20 November 2024.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)(a)
A copy of the template now in use to record monthly fire drills which take place in the service was received by the inspector.

(b)
A copy of the annual maintenance of the fire alarm in the service dated 20 November 2024 was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance in place for the children who were present on the day of inspection.