

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX121
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Name of Service:	The Childrens House Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Ballycross, Bridgetown, Wexford, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y35 C898
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Name of Registered Provider:	Dorothee Von Engelbrechten
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	11
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspector, Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford.
Inspection undertaken by:	C. 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
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Description of service

The children's house is a privately operated service. It is located in a rural setting just outside the village of Bridgetown Co Wexford. The service offers Montessori play based programme to children from aged 2 to 6 years. The service can accommodate up to 22 children and is registered as a full day care facility. The service operates from purpose-built premises attached to the side of the registered provider's home. It consists of an entrance lobby, kitchen, large playroom, cosy library and bathrooms. There is a large garden and outdoor play area which the children enjoy direct access to from the playroom.

Staffing

The service employs five staff including the registered provider who work directly with the children. The registered provider works in the service and is the designated person in charge. The staff working directly with the children attending the service held a major award in Montessori Education and Early Childhood Care and Education at the minimum Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework. There is also an in case of emergency person available to the service in the event of an emergency.

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 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4)(6)(A) Management and Recruitment,
Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing levels,
Regulation 17 Information for parents,
Regulation 21 Equipment and materials,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,
Regulation 25 First aid,
Regulation 26 Fire Safety 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 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

(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)

On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service. There is a second named staff available to deputise as needed.

The staff files for six staff were reviewed on the day.

(2)(a)(b)

There were validated references for all employees kept in each staff member's file.

- (c)
Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)
Police vetting disclosures were available on file for the staff who had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.
- (4)
Certificates of qualifications for staff members working directly with the preschool children were available 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.*
- (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)(2)
Throughout the period of the inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with children ensuring that the correct adult to child ratios were maintained at all times.
- During the morning there were 22 children being directly cared for by 3 staff. After the sessional session finished, 11 children and 3 staff were present for part time care. The registered provider employs a fourth adult as the in case of emergency person, who comes to the service on occasion to ensure she is familiar with the children and running of the service. This person was present on the day of inspection and was supernumerary to the staff working with the children

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

The registered provider provides the parents with a parent handbook which includes an overview of the service's key policies. The handbook outlines to parents the curriculum, the hours of operation, staff qualifications, fees, contact details and the facilities available within the service. It provides parents with information on the day-to-day requirements and running of the service: settling in, behaviour management, complaints, fire safety and first aid.

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 playroom was well equipped and furnished with a variety of furniture, toys and materials. There were child sized tables and chairs suitable for tabletop activities and Montessori work and snack time. There was sufficient space for children and staff to move around and enjoy circle time. The children enjoyed their circle time during the morning which included chopping up apples to learn about equations.

There was a small shelf available where children left their water bottles so they could freely access them during the day. Open shelving units ran along walls which were used to display the Montessori materials for the children's work. They were easily accessible to the children to see what they wanted to choose for their Montessori work. There was a sufficient variety including manipulative play materials, fine motor skills and life skill materials. The materials were of good quality and the room also included a library, which was a small room set up with a soft sofa, table and chairs, books and a family photo wall.

Outdoor equipment included items such as a mud kitchen, playhouse, balance beams, building blocks, chalk boards, seating areas, a tippee, ride on toys and a covered area with wall art. There was a variety of surfaces such as circular lawn surrounded by pebble pathways. The children enjoyed walks through the woods beside the playschool. The outdoor area was a natural environment and children enjoyed free and imaginative play while outdoors. The service's pet rabbit was present on the lawn which the children enjoy feeding.

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 to the premises was secured. The outdoor play areas were fully enclosed and secured to the side of the premises.

Infection Control:

The playroom was clean and well maintained. There was warm water, liquid hand soap and hand towels available in the toilets. There was consistent good hand hygiene observed on the day. Staff carrying out nappy changing in the service adhered to good infection control practices and were observed to wear gloves and aprons.

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 were staff trained in FAR and first aid for children available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position and was 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)

Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on the 16 May 2024.

(1)(b)

A record was maintained of when the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm were serviced in September 2023

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate that insurance was in place.