

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016DR023
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Name of Service:	The Children's House Montessori Primary School
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Address of Service:	Lower Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A94 P499
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fredericka Sheppard
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	03/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	13
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland
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 Montessori Primary School is a private service located in Stillorgan, County Dublin. The service is purpose-built, providing care and education for children aged 2 years and 8 months to 6 years. Opening hours are 8:30am to 3pm, Monday to Friday. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme operates from 9am to 12:30pm. On the day of inspection, the service was registered to accommodate 42 pre-school children, who attend two of the four rooms in the service. The remaining two rooms are used by the primary school which accommodates children age 6 to 12 years. A large outdoor area is situated to the rear of the building.

Staffing

There are currently seven adults employed in the preschool service, including the principle who is the person in charge. On the day of the inspection, there were seven adults present including the principal, the school secretary and five adults working directly with the children. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 Record of a Pre-School Child.

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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 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*
- (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,*

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(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge and the person appointed to deputise were on the premises at all times during the operational hours of the service.

(c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) Following a discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that two adults commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 5 September 2023. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2), (3), (4) was reviewed in respect of the adults as detailed below. The requirements of Regulation 9(2)(c) relating to Garda vetting were reviewed for all adults employed in the school.

(a) Three written and verified references were available from past employers.

(b) One written and verified reference was available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 13 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Two of the adults required international police vetting, and the required documentation was available for one of the adults.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the two adults who worked directly with children attending the service held a qualification deemed suitable by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

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Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) International Police vetting was not available in relation to one adult who previously lived outside of the State for a period of more than 6 months as an adult.
- (3) Documentation reviewed showed that the procedures specified above under Regulation 9(2)(c) and (d) had not been carried out prior to the two adults commencing employment in the service. Allowing staff to begin work with children before their suitability has been established may result in individuals who are not appropriate having access to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has obtained International Police vetting for the staff member and has reviewed the services selection and reference checking process in the staff handbook.

Supporting documentation submitted

Police vetting submitted

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (d) and (3) has been adequately addressed.

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) On the day of the inspection, there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their needs.

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- (2) The minimum adult-to-child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection. There were 5 adults working directly with 36 preschool children in the morning, and 3 adults working directly with 13 preschool children in the afternoon.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of nine children's files were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.

- (3)
- (c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were provided for review.

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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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The inspector found appropriate and suitable care practices in place in the service as follows:

Staff demonstrated warm, respectful, and responsive interactions with the children throughout the inspection. Children were consistently supported during the daily routine. Staff responded to children in a timely manner while encouraging independence. Children appeared comfortable and secure in the service which was evident in how they confidently interacted with their environment and their peers. Children were offered meals at regular intervals, which were provided by the parents/ The service provided a variety of fresh fruit that was stored at children's level, allowing them to access it as they wished. A rolling snack routine was implemented effectively supporting children's independence, choice and decision-making skills. This was observed to be managed by the children, they independently retrieved their snacks, sat with their peers, engaged in conversation and ate their snack in an unhurried manner. Staff were observed sitting with children during this time engaging in conversation in a relaxed manner.

Throughout the inspection children were observed as active agents in choosing their activities and staff provided time for children to master skills, viewing them as confident competent learners. Staff were observed supporting children to be visible to one another, encouraging them to invite other children to join their activities.

Handwashing was routinely encouraged particularly after using the toilet and following outdoor play. Rest areas were available in each of the care rooms. Children were observed using the areas to read books or to sit and talk to one another. All of the children had the opportunity to engage in outdoor play during which they were observed playing basketball, running, climbing and exploring a small wooded area supporting the development of their gross motor skills and their curiosity about the natural environment. Staff explained that parents/ guardians are provided with opportunities to engage in both formal and informal conversations about their child's daily experiences within the service. They highlighted that annual parent/guardian teacher meetings are held to support ongoing communication. In addition, parents/ guardians are invited into the service to observe their child in the classroom if they have any concerns, fostering strong partnerships between families and staff.

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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 internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- External doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised access.
- Blind cords were safely secured from children accessing them.
- All toys and equipment used by the children on the day of inspection were in good condition.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of children's reach.

Infection Control:

- The classrooms were visibly clean and well maintained.
- Pedal operated bins were in use in the toilets to support the safe disposal of waste.
- Suitable covers were provided for the sandboxes to ensure they remained protected when not in use.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff were familiar with the procedures to take to ensure medication is given safely if needed, including obtaining written parental/guardian consent.

Fire Safety:

- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.
- Fire exits were observed to be unobstructed, clearly identified and easily opened from the inside during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Electrical cables were not safely secured and were accessible to children. Two cables from a fridge and an electric heater in the Front room were not fixed to the wall, posing a potential risk to children's safety.

Infection Control:

2. The facilities available for handwashing in the Front room did not adequately support infection control. Children were observed using bars of soap to wash their hands. This practice poses a risk of cross contamination and the spread of infection.

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3. A vinyl mat in use in the Front room was observed to be torn with the inner foam exposed. This surface cannot be adequately cleaned or disinfected posing a risk of the spread of infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider stated the following corrective and preventive actions were taken.

1. The cables have been fixed and the service will carry out regular health and safety checks.

Infection Control:

2. The soap bars have been replaced with liquid soap.
3. A new changing mat has been purchased and the service will carry out regular health and safety checks.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. No evidence submitted

Infection Control:

2. Photograph submitted
3. Photograph submitted

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.