

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016DR023		
Name of Service:	The Children's House Montessori Primary School		
Address of Service:	Lower Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	A94 P499		
Name of Registered Provider:	Fredericka Sheppard		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	05/09/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM 9
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, 7th Floor, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8.		
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern		
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		

Description of service

The Children's House Montessori is a purpose-built private Montessori school in Stillorgan, County Dublin for children aged 2 years and 8 months to 12 years of age. The school opens at 8:30am and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) session operates from 9am to 12:30pm. On the day of inspection, the service was registered to accommodate 36 pre-school children. These children attend two of four rooms within the school. There is an option for children to stay until 3pm.

Staffing

The principal of the school is the person in charge of the service. There are four Montessori teachers employed to work directly with the pre-school children. A school secretary is employed to manage administration duties.

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 areas 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 an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

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

Staffing levels – regulations 11(1) & (2)

Health, welfare and development of child – regulation 19(1)(a)

First Aid – regulation 25

Fire safety measures – regulation 26 (1), (2) & (4)

Insurance – regulation 28

Minimum space requirements – regulation 30.

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

The registered provider submitted a change in circumstance proposal to increase the number of pre-school children attending from 36 to 42 prior to the inspection. This was considered during the inspection and the findings are outlined under the relevant regulations within this report.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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 service had a named person in charge and a person who could deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The person in charge was present when the inspector arrived and remained on the premises throughout the inspection.

- (2)
- (a) & (b) All staff had a minimum of two references available. References from reputable sources had been sourced for those who had only one or no previous employers. Records were available of the verification checks that had been carried out.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults.
- (d) International police vetting was available for two adults who had lived outside the state for more than six months as an adult. A record of attempts made to obtain international vetting for a third staff member who lived in another state was available.
- (4) All four staff employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification.

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 always working directly with the children.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was always maintained. Four adults worked directly with 36 children during the sessional period. Two adults worked directly with 9 children who were attending on a part-time or full day care basis.

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

The inspector observed that the children's learning, development, and well-being was supported by the staff and the environment. The children spent periods outdoors where there was equipment available to support full-body movement and a range of play and learning experiences. The outdoor area was large and laid out with natural elements including grass and trees. Picnic benches were available for eating outdoors or table-top activities.

The indoor areas were bright with large low-level windows which had a view to the garden. These were laid out to support the children's independence. There were clearly defined learning areas including practical life, sensorial, math, language and cultural experiences. Areas with mats and soft seating were available for children to rest or take a break from activities. The children participated in self-directed exploration of the environment. They had opportunities for collaboration and discussed their ideas with the adults. Staff demonstrated an awareness of the children's dispositions, and they supported children with additional needs to participate.

The children had access to their snacks and drinks which were stored on an open shelf throughout the day. The children and adults sat together when having lunch and engaged in conversation. They were supported to be independent with their personal care. Low level hooks were provided for their personal belongings. The children used the toilet as they needed with staff reminding them to wash their hands afterwards. The inspector observed the staff interacting warmly with the children, engaging positively, and supporting them in their work and play.

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) Two staff had up to date certificates in first aid training for children. At least one staff member was rostered to be present at all times of opening.

(2)(a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in a conspicuous position in each classroom.

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) Records were available of monthly fire drills undertaken. The most recent fire drill was dated 8 June 2023. The service was closed for the summer.

(b) Records were available demonstrating the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms had been serviced on 14 December 2022 and 4 September 2023 respectively.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were clearly displayed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had an insurance certificate for 85 pupils dated from 14 March 2023 until 13 March 2024.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

The suitability of the sanitary facilities was assessed due to the proposal to increase the number of pre-school children attending from 36 to 42. There were 4 toilets and 4 wash hand basins which is adequate to accommodate the increased number of children. Separate sanitary facilities were available for school-aged children and staff.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(2) The rooms were measured to assess the suitability of the proposed increased number of children attending from 36 to 42. There was sufficient free floor space available to accommodate the increased number.