

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2016DY023

Name of Service: Highfield Montessori School

Address of Service: 71 B Brighton Square, Rathgar, Dublin 6, Co. Dublin

Eircode: D06 E791

Name of Registered Provider: Damhnait O'Loughlin

Service type: Sessional

Date(s) of Inspection: 04/10/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate
2nd Floor, Unit 4/5
The Nexus Building
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Ballycoolin
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Inspection undertaken by: C. Harte

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

Highfield Montessori School is a privately owned service located in a residential area of Rathgar on the southern side of Dublin city and has been in operation since 1996. Highfield Montessori School participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and offers sessional childcare provision to pre-school children aged 2 - 6 years. Care and education are provided using the Montessori approach. The pre-school's hours of operation are 09:00am to 12:30pm Monday to Friday. The service is based in a large bright church hall. The early years service has exclusive use of the adjacent sanitary facilities while it is in operation. There is a shared kitchen adjacent to the hall and the service has use of this if required. The service has access to a large privately-owned park opposite the building that is used for outdoor activities and features a variety of surface types including natural grass, hard-paving, and gravel.

Staffing

The service has two staff including the registered provider, both who work directly with the children. Both staff members were present in the pre-school on the day of inspection.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under;

- Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1),(3) Staffing Levels
- Regulation 15(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i) Record of a Pre-school Child
- Regulation 19(1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child
- Regulation 25 First Aid
- Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures

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) The service had a designated person in charge and named persons to deputise as required. The registered provider was in the service when the inspector arrived and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The files of two adults who work directly with preschool children were reviewed. The following was observed:

- (a) (b) Two written references were available from a past employer and two written references were available from a source other than a past employer. References available for the second person were validated by the registered provider.

- (a) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for both adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (b) Police vetting was not required as none of the 2 files reviewed demonstrated that the persons had resided outside of the jurisdiction for 6 months or longer as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to show that two adults who worked directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 7 and Level 8 respectively on the National Qualifications Framework.

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

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1)(3) On the day of the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children. There were two adults available to 20 children aged between 2.5 - 5 years old when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service.

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

(1) A sample of eleven record forms of children who currently attend the service were reviewed. These records contained all the information required under (a) to (i) above.

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

(1)(b)

- Staff were observed to be responsive to the needs of children for example a staff member supported a child's comfort while playing by asking the child if they required help to remove a jumper after discussion about the child potentially feeling too warm.
- Children were observed to move freely around the hall selecting materials based on their own interests. Children used the tables, floor mats and the library area including small rocking chairs and a wobble cushion offering a variety of spaces to play and engage with their peers.
- Staff regularly reminded the children about toileting and self-care practices such as nasal care.
- Children were given clear guidance on the routine of the day supporting smooth and calm transitions. Songs were used to support transitions including a safety song as children walked to the park.
- The children's lunch time was a social experience as they sat with their peers and engaged in conversation. The mealtime was relaxed, and children were given ample time to enjoy their food.
- Children were encouraged to have responsibility for their belongings for example to place lunch boxes in their bags following their lunch encouraging independence.
- All children accessed the park for outdoor play on the day of the inspection.
- Staff discussed the sharing of information with parents through daily conversation at drop off and collection, parent coffee mornings and a parent's pack shared by email containing relevant information such as the healthy eating policy and illness exclusion.

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 was secure when the inspector arrived unannounced. The registered provider attended the door to allow entry. This prevented unauthorised persons from gaining access.
- Toys and equipment were observed to be in good condition and suitable for use.
- The private park used by the children for outdoor play was fully enclosed with a fence.

Infection Control:

- Childres lunches from home including perishable items such as yogurt, ham and cheese were stored in the refrigerator.
- Children’s water bottles were observed to be individually labelled.
- Warm water and dispensed soap were available in the sanitary area to support effective hand hygiene practices.
- Children were encouraged to wash their hands before lunch.
- A foot pedal operated bin was available in sanitary area supporting infection control practices.

Fire Safety:

- The emergency exit was observed clear of obstruction.

Outing:

- Before leaving the service to go to the private park staff ensured they had a first aid kit, the service roll book and completed a head count of the group. Children were encouraged to walk in pairs with staff present at the front and back of the group.

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) A review of available documents and conversation with management showed that a staff member trained in First Aid Response (FAR) was rostered to be on the premises and available to the children at all times during the opening hours of the service.

(2) (a)(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored safely out of reach of children, readily available and easily accessible if required at any time.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) A record was maintained of all fire drills which occurred in the service. The record showed that fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis. The last fire drill took place on 17th September 2024.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises was available. The certificates reviewed showed that the firefighting equipment had been serviced on 27th October 2023 while the smoke alarms had been serviced on 15th July 2024.