

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016FL005
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Name of Service:	Precious Days Montessori
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Address of Service:	Scouts Den, Chapel Road, Lusk, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K45 PX99
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Name of Registered Provider:	Louise Lawless
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle
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

Precious Days Montessori is a sessional Early Years service operated by the registered provider and her business partner. The service offers sessional preschool care and education to children aged from 2 years 8 months to 5 years participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and operates from 09:10 am to 12:10 pm Monday to Friday. Precious Days Montessori is located in a scouts den in Lusk, North Dublin, the service has sole use of the scouts den for the operational hours of the service. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the front of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider and her business partner work directly with the children on a daily basis in addition to a staff member who is employed in the service to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs, a post which is funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

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 an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15,16,19, 23, 25 and 28; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child.

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

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider via e mail on the 05/03/2025 in relation to one staff member who did not have completed Garda vetting disclosures available on the day of inspection.

A response was received from the service on the 06/03/2025 which outlined the steps taken by the service to address the immediate action notice, this has been accepted.

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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and a named staff member was appointed to deputise when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at the service and was present for the duration of the inspection.

The files for all 3 staff members including the registered provider and 2 staff members were reviewed.

(2)(a) &(b) Two written, validated references were available for the registered provider and 1 staff member whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and 1 staff member. The Garda vetting records reviewed demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for 1 staff member who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 2 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service including the registered provider held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider stated that 1 staff file had been mislaid on the day of inspection. The following records were not available for 1 staff member.

(2)(a) &(b) Two validated written references were not available for 1 staff member.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was not available for 1 staff member who works directly with the children in the service.

(4) Documentary evidence was not available to confirm that 1 staff member whose files were reviewed and who works directly with the children in the service including the registered provider held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a) & (b) Registered provider received a copy of the references for their staff member.

(c) A new garda vetting has been received.

(4) Registered provider has received copies of the staff members qualifications.

Preventive Action

(2)(a) & (b) All references will be kept on file with all relevant paperwork and copies have been made.

(c) Copies have been made and filed within staff folder. Also, they have saved copies on file.

(4) Copies have been made, and paperwork will be kept in the staff folder and checked on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two validated written references.

Garda vetting disclosure.

Evidence of childcare qualification in respect on 1 staff member.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been reviewed and accepted.

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 with the children on the day of the inspection.

(3) The adult to child ratio was correct when the inspector arrived for an unannounced inspection and was appropriately maintained in the service throughout the inspection.

There were 3 adults caring for 16 children aged 2 years 4 months to 4 years 6 months. A staff member was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

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 sampling process was used in relation to the children’s records. All 11 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1)(h) The children’s attendance was recorded on a daily basis in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) In respect of 1 staff member, there was no recorded history of past employment and relevant experience available for inspection. Therefore, it was not possible to determine whether international police vetting was required in accordance with Regulation 9(2)(c).

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)(a) Manager has received a copy of the staff members C.V.

Preventive Action

(1)(a) Manager has copies of the C.V. and this has been put in the staff folder with all relevant paperwork. This folder will be checked on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence was provided.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been reviewed and accepted.

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

(1)(a) Each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service in relation to the following:

Basic needs:

- During the inspection the 3 staff members present were observed to be caring, responsive, and attentive in their interactions with the children. They demonstrated knowledge of children's individual needs and interests by providing flexibility and choice within the daily routine. For example, when a child in the service did not want to participate in planned activities a staff member followed their lead and supported them in another activity.
- The children bring their own snack with them from home, a system was in place where the children took turns to distribute the snacks to their peers thereby encouraging the children's independence skills. The staff members sat and chatted to the children while they ate their snack encouraging a social and relaxed atmosphere. The inspection took place on pancake Tuesday and the children enjoyed pancakes following their morning snack followed by a pancake flipping activity.
- Children's cues and requests to use the toilet were responding to promptly, and children were accompanied to access and use the toilets which were located on the corridor adjacent to the care room.
- A comfortable rest area comprising of floor and back cushions located alongside a selection of books was available for the children to use. Children were observed to use the area to sit and chat together.
- The staff members were observed to be calm and responsive with the children and used a combination of distraction techniques and negotiation to address minor issues that arose.

Supporting relationships:

- The staff members were observed interacting with the children in a warm and caring manner. Informal conversation was used as a means of engaging children with an activity with staff members using open ended questioning techniques. Children were praised for their behaviours especially when they were helpful to others, took turns and shared resources.

- The children appeared confident and relaxed in their environment and were observed naturally forming small groups and engaging in a range of tabletop and floor play activities during the inspection.
- The staff members were observed taking the opportunities to interact with parents at collection time and update them on their children's day in the service.

Physical and material environment:

- In the care room resources were easily available and accessible on low level shelving. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The indoor environment was arranged into areas of interest which provided a range of experiences for children such as a well-resourced home corner, reading area, a range of Montessori materials, transport toys, small world play area, fine motor and a broad range of tabletop activities.
- The children's artwork was on display including a range of artwork that had been completed in relation to St Patricks day.
- An enclosed outdoor area is provided to the front of the service. The area is covered with a tarmacadam surface and play resources and materials are taken outside for the children to use.

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 external doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on high shelving and in locked cupboards.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were available in the sanitary facilities adjacent to the care room. Appropriate hand washing occurred as required throughout the inspection.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules available.
- The children's snacks provided from home were refrigerated on arrival for the children. This reduced the risk of bacteria multiplying to levels which could result in food contamination.

Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

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 person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced by in-date FAR certification provided for inspection in respect of 2 staff members.
- (2)(a) and (b) The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

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) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place in February 2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in July 2024 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 29/05/24.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

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 the preschool service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate 22 sessional preschool children, with an expiry date 27/11/2025.