

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016FL019
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Name of Service:	Early Learners Montessori
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Address of Service:	9B Main Street, Ongar Village, Dublin 15
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Eircode:	D15 H5PX
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Name of Registered Provider:	Erica Doyle
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	26/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	12
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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:	E. Griffin and L.A Webster
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Early Learners Montessori has been in operation since 2007. The service is located in a two-storey building in a small shopping parade in Ongar. The service is registered to provide care for children aged between 3 to 6 years old, on a sessional basis and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates two sessions one between 9:15am and 12:45 pm and one between 1:30 and 4:30 pm on weekdays. The service is comprised of one care room one with separate sanitary facilities for staff and children. There is also access to a small kitchen area. The service was registered on 10 June 2016 and has access to a public outdoor play area.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs three adults including one adult who is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The registered provider and two adults were present when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service. During the afternoon the registered provider and the third adult who is the deputy designated person in charge were present.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2) and (4)-Management and Recruitment.

Regulation 11(1) and (3)-Staffing Levels.

Regulation 15(1) and 3(c) Record of a Pre-School Child.

Regulation 19 (1)(a)-Health, Welfare and Development of Child.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety, and Welfare of child.

Regulation 26(1)(a)(b), (2)(c) and (4) Fire Safety Measures.

Regulation 28 Insurance.

However, on inspection an additional non-compliance was identified under Regulation 8(1) Notification of Change in Circumstances. The findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under: Regulation 15, Regulation 19 and Regulation 23.

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

26 February 2025

An immediate action notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection under Regulation 23, in relation to an identified safety risk. Immediate action was taken by the registered provider which mitigated the risk. Further details are available under Regulation 23.1

An internal Tusla referral was made in relation to the service operating outside of its registered status. Further information is available under Regulation 8.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not notify Tusla of a change in the age profile of the children attending and were found to be operating outside of their registration. The service is registered to cater for children aged 3 to 6 years. However, a review of paperwork and discussion with management showed that the service currently has two children aged 2 years old attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) The registered provider was unaware that it was an issue as ECCE age starts from 2 years and 8 months. The registered provider immediately contacted CIC department to change the age profile from 3-6years to 2-6years. The change of circumstances is now complete.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Documentary evidence of change of circumstances completed.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions taken by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance identified under Regulation 8.

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,*
- (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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.
 - (c) The service had a clear management structure and adults were aware of their own role and responsibilities.
- (2) The files of the registered provider and three adults who work in the service were reviewed.
- (a) Five written and verified references were available from past employers.
 - (b) Three written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.
 - (d) International Police vetting was not required as there was evidence to show that the registered provider and three adults had not lived outside of Ireland for more than six months as an adult.
- (4) The registered provider and three adults staff held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

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) The registered provider ensured there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained in the service throughout the inspection as follows:
- During the morning there were 3 adults caring for 19 children aged 2 ½-4 ½ years old.
 - During the afternoon there were 2 adults caring for 12 children aged 3-5 years old.

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 ten children's registration records were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.
- (3) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspection team were available for review.

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

Basic Needs:

- A rest area was available to the children in the care room. The area included child sized furniture and books providing the children with a comfortable place to rest or engage in quiet activities.
- Drinking water was easily accessible within the care room there was a water station with drinking cups and the children were observed to use this area.
- Children's sense of identify were promoted throughout the service. For example, there was a 'Family Wall' display, a 'Pet Wall' display, a 'Birthday Time' display and the children's artwork was displayed throughout the care room. In addition, children had their own coat hooks labelled with their name and photograph.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff reported that information about the child's day such as photographs of activities, events happening and policies and procedures are shared with parents via an electronic communication application. Conversations were held at drop off and collection times. These updates keep parents informed about the daily life of their child.

- Adults within the service spoke to each other in a respectful and professional manner, demonstrating to children, positive interactions.
- The staff were observed to interact continuously with the children. For example, during tabletop activity time the staff sat beside the children and offered encouragement and support when required.
- Staff were able to discuss how they support children with the transition from home to the service by offering a settling-in period and working in collaboration with parents. In addition, staff were able to discuss how they supported children with the transition from the service to school by linking in with the local primary schools and how they encouraged children to be independent for example putting on their own coats and tidying up in-between activities.
- The service is integrated with the local community, this was evidenced by photographs shown to the inspectors of the day previous where a fireman from the local fire brigade had visited the service to chat to the children about fire safety.
- There was evidence that staff planned activities to support children's emotional development and friendships. Staff discussed how the previous week they had celebrated friendship week, and the children got paired up with different partners and made each other presents for example artwork and bracelets.
- Language and literacy were supported in the care room through discussion at circle time, mealtimes and story time.

Equipment and Materials:

- Child sized tables and chairs were available to the children, providing a comfortable area to eat snacks and take part in tabletop activities.
- The care room had defined areas of interest with supporting equipment. Areas of interest included a home corner with a kitchen, dress up area, investigation area and an art area. Toys and materials were themed and labelled which provided for spontaneous play opportunities. There were boxes with connecting equipment, dolls, animals, jigsaws and pincer grip activities. Montessori learning approach materials supporting the areas of practical life, sensorial, language, maths and culture were also present.
- There was a visual daily routine on display and staff were observed to give children verbal and visual reminders in advance from moving from one activity to the next activity. This provided the children with a sense of stability, security, and predictability.

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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. In addition, the entrance door was appropriately monitored by staff who asked the inspection team to sign in the visitor book on arrival.
- The kitchen area was not accessible to the children and the door of the care room remained closed throughout the inspection.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored safely out of the reach to the children.
- There were no trailing flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- Toys and equipment used by the children were observed to be well maintained and in a good state of repair.
- Windows were located up high and were inaccessible to children. Windows could remain safely open.

Infection Control:

- In the care room perishable snacks such as yoghurt and cheese brought by the children from home for morning snack time were observed to be stored in a fridge reducing the risk of bacteria multiplying.
- Foot pedal operated bins were available in the care room and sanitary area to allow hygienic disposal of contaminated materials.
- The premises was observed to be in a clean and hygienic condition. There were cleaning schedules on the wall of the care room and on the door of the sanitary area.
- Windows in the care room were observed to be open which allowed for circulation of air and reduced the risk of cross infection.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications are not routinely given within the service, but staff demonstrated knowledge the procedures for medication administration if required.

Fire Safety:

- All fire emergency exit doors were observed to be clear from obstruction. This helped ensure the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The temperature of the water in the sanitary area off the care room where children were observed to use unsupervised was measured at 66.3°C at 10.02am. This posed a risk of scalding. An immediate action notice was issued on inspection. It is acknowledged that the registered provider took immediate action and reduced the water temperature when the inspectors brought the identified risk to their attention and children were supervised to wash their hands using the mixer tap for the duration of the inspection. Mitigating the risk to children.
- The inspectors observed one child to eat uncut grapes brought from home at snack time. This presented a choking hazard. HSE and Tusla guidelines state that fruit served to young children must be quartered or halved. It is acknowledged that the registered provider took immediate action and chopped up the grapes when the inspectors brought the identified risk to their attention. Mitigating the risk to the child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The registered provider contacted a plumber for blending valves are to be fitted on both children's sinks. The sinks are now at the correct temperature.
- All snacks including grapes will be thoroughly checked by staff members. Staff will cut grapes if required. How to cut grapes correctly is part of the service starter pack email and the service regularly post images on social media reminding parents to cut grapes. Parents will be reminded via text, email and social media about cutting grapes

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence of blending valves fitted and the water at the correct temperature.
- Photographic evidence of visual reminder to parents to cut grapes and how to do so correctly.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions taken by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Documentation was available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. The last fire drills took place on 30 January 2025 for the morning session and 7 February 2025 for the afternoon session.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last serviced in September 2024 and the smoke detection system in October 2024.
- (2) (c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.
- (4) A procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display in a prominent position on the wall in the care room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance for a maximum of 22 children attending the service on a sessional care basis with an expiry date of 27 November 2025.