

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019FL004
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Name of Service:	Little Brightstars Montessori Ltd
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Address of Service:	Main Street, Ballyboughal, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A41 X903
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mark Ennis
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	27/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	5
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
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

Little Brightstars Montessori Ltd was established in 2019 as a privately owned early years' service and the service was taken over by the current registered provider in 2022. The service is located on the first floor of a play and activity centre in the village of Ballyboughal, North Co Dublin in a large care room which can be divided into 2 rooms if required. Entry to the service is gained through a main entrance porch which leads into a soft play area and coffee dock on the ground floor and by then accessing a staircase which leads to the first floor where the preschool room is located. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children aged from 2 to 6 years from 07:30 am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday with the majority of children attending the service from 9.00am to 12:30pm with no pre-school child attending for longer than 5 hours. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. School aged childcare for children up to 12 years of age is also provided in the service.

Staffing

The service employs 4 staff members, 3 staff members work directly with the children. Two staff members were employed in the service to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs, in posts which are funded by the minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. A student on work experience placement was present in the service on the day of inspection. The registered provider does not work directly with the children attending 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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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

(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.

(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 manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

Five staff files were reviewed including the file for the service manager, 3 staff members including a staff member who works with school aged children only and a student on work experience placement in the service. Three staff members work directly with the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) Two written references were available for 4 staff members employed in the service and the student on work experience placement.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 4 staff members and student on work experience placement.

The Garda vetting records reviewed demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as the review of the staff files demonstrated that no staff member had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 3 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service each held an appropriate childcare qualification on the national framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) Two validated written references were not available for 1 staff member and the student who was present on work experience placement in the service.

(3) Following a review of the staff files and a previous staff roster it was apparent that 1 staff member who works directly with the children had commenced working in the service in advance of Garda vetting procedures being completed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a)(b) Two written references for student have been collected and put on file. No longer need written references for the staff member as she has left the service.

(3) Make sure everybody is garda vetted before they begin working in the service and manager has received all relevant documents.

Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) Make sure everybody has their references before starting the job.

(3) Make sure everybody is garda vetted before the begin working in the service and we have received all relevant documents.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of 2 validated written references.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 9 – Management and recruitment 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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Montessori room there were 14 children aged 3 years to 4 year 5 months being cared for by 3 staff members. 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.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff attendance records maintained at 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.*

(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 sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All of the eight sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a)(b)(c)(d)(f)(g) in this regulation.

(3) The children's records were available and open for review by the inspector as an authorised person.

Non-Compliance Information

On review of the eight children's registration records completed.

One of the eight children's records did not include Part (1)(e) authorisation for the collection of the child, if any, this section had been left blank.

One of the eight children's records did not include Part (1)(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the children, this section had been left blank.

Three of the eight children's records did not include Part (1)(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Manager has given all parents a new and updated application form to fill out. One child who had no authorisation to collect does not have any other family members in the country. The form without record of immunisations and parental consent for medical treatment have been given back to the parents to fill out.

Preventive Action

Ensure all parts of application form has been filled out before child starts in the service.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child has been adequately addressed.

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:

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

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

Compliance Information

(h) Details of children's attendance including arrival and departure times were recorded in attendance registers in the care room.

(j) Medication of administration forms were available in the service to record medication administered to children.

Non-Compliance Information

(l) A staff roster was not available in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(I) Weekly staff roster is hung up in the classroom.

Preventive Action

(I) Make sure new roster goes up every Monday.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of staff roster

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been adequately addressed

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) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- There was a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the service. The staff members spoke positively to and about the children during the inspection and were responsive to the children's individual needs, likes and preferences.
- The children were observed to be encouraged to be independent at snack times, with support and help given to children where needed, with the children bringing their own snacks with them from home. The adults were observed to stay with the children at snack time, using this as an opportunity to engage in child led conversations.

- The children’s personal care needs were attended to during the inspection. The children’s sanitary area was located on the ground floor, the children were observed to request use of the toilets as they required, and the adults accompanied the children and supervised their time in the sanitary area.
- A rest area comprising of 2 low sized couches and beanbags were available for the children to take a rest as needed.
- Appropriate language and practices were observed being used by staff when supporting children’s social behaviours or supporting resolution of minor conflicts. The staff members were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. When minor disputes arose the staff members supported the children to find positive solutions.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The children were observed to be comfortable, and familiar with the staff members and within the environment. This was evident as children called the adults by name, invited them to play, approached them with ease and enjoyed being around them.
- Transitions were supported in the service. Throughout the session verbal strategies were used by the adults to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities and movement.
- The practitioners in the service were observed taking the opportunity to interact with the parents at collection time and update them on their child’s day in the service.

Physical and material environment:

- Overall, apart from the non-compliances documented below the play 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.
- Areas of interest within the room included a home area with a kitchen and play items provided, an assortment of dolls, doll care items, a table with hair care items alongside a rail of dress up materials all of which supported the children’s imaginary play. Transportation toys including cars were provided alongside a play garage, a variety of table top materials including blocks and construction toys were available along with a selection of books which supported the children’s language development.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. The children's water bottles were not freely available to the children as they were stored in their bags located in their individual cubbies. This prevented the children from taking a drink spontaneously if they were thirsty during the day.

Supporting relationships around children:

2. The inspectors were informed that an individualised care plan had not been developed for a child who may at times require additional support from staff members when in attendance in the service, taking account of the child's strengths, interests and preferences in order to facilitate meaningful interactions and activities.

Physical and material environment:

3. Two shelving units were observed to be turned away from the children and stored tightly against the wall which prevented the children from accessing the play resources contained within, which included specialised Montessori materials and tabletop resources. The children were given access to these shelves at 11:30am and were then observed to play enthusiastically with the contents of both shelves, this practice restricts children's play through reducing their access to play materials and resources.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Basic needs:

1. Water bottles are now displayed on the shelf beside their bags.

Supporting relationships around children:

2. Care plan has been written up for that child.

Physical and material environment:

3. Shelves are left turned around so children can access them at all times.

Preventive Action

Basic needs:

1. Ensure water bottles have been taken out of the bag first thing in the morning.

Supporting relationships around children:

2. Ensure manager writes up a care plan beforehand.

Physical and material environment:

3. Ensure all shelves are turned facing the children at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was provided.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or

shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) A rest areas comprising of 2 couches, bean bags and cushions were available in the care room for the children to take a break from activities throughout the day. The person in charge confirmed that no children that are currently in attendance in the service require to sleep whilst attending.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) The temporary outdoor area which was available to the children on the last inspection of the service on the 25/01/2024 was not in place on the day of inspection and despite the day being dry and sunny the outdoor area was not established throughout the course of the day for the children to be facilitated in outdoor play. It is acknowledged that the boundary fencing that surrounds the play area was observed stored in the car park and the staff members stated that the area was not in place because of the recent weather storms.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a) Garden (play area outdoors) is put up every Monday morning before children start.

Preventive Action

(2)(a) Staff putting up garden every Monday morning.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of outdoor area in position.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play has been adequately addressed.

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 doors were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. Entry to the service is facilitated by a staff member who on answering the call bell releases the door to open. The care room on the first floor is accessed by using a combination door lock.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on high shelving and in locked cupboards.
- Play materials and equipment provided in the care room were observed to be safe and suitable for the age range and developmental stage of the children present.

Infection Control:

- The children's packed lunches, supplied from home, were refrigerated on arrival to the service which reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.

- There was liquid soap and paper hand towels provided for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service. The children were encouraged to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet, with assistance provided when necessary.
- The premises and the play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits in the service were clear and unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Thermostatically controlled warm water was not available for hand washing at the wash hand basin in the care room where the children washed their hands throughout the day. The water at the hot tap felt cold to touch at 11:40am. Cold water does not support pre-school children to effectively wash their hands.
2. The cushions in the cosy area were stained and required laundering.
3. The step that the children used to access the sink in the care room was ingrained with dirt and required cleaning.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Infection Control:

1. Tap has been fixed. Hot water has been fixed and is accessible all day.
2. New beanbags have been bought for cosy corner.
3. The step has been cleaned/disinfected.

Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. Check tap is working each morning and hot water is on.
2. Cushions cleaned daily.
3. Step cleaned regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was provided.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.

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

(2)(a) & (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was not immediately available to the children attending the service at all times. One member of staff who works directly with the school aged children only and is not always present with the pre-school children currently holds in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training. It is acknowledged that 1 staff member has in date first aid training.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1) Staff members have booked their FAR training for March and April 2025.

Preventive Action

(1) Make sure this is kept up to date and one staff member with FAR is in the building at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Confirmation e mail in relation to FAR training.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 25 First aid has been adequately addressed.

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) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place on 20/12/2024.
- (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 August 2024 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 03/09/24.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

- A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
- (b) safe and secure,
 - (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

- (b)The building was observed to be safe and secure. Access to the building was gained via an intercom system at a secure door on the ground floor. This reduced the risk of an unauthorised adult entering the premises or a child leaving the premises unsupervised.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)The registered provider did not ensure that the premises was being maintained in an appropriate condition as evidenced by the following:

The paint on the wall adjacent to the cosy area was peeling with plaster exposed underneath.

The paint on the wall beneath the window alongside the sink in the care room was peeling with plaster exposed underneath.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(d) Walls have been fixed and painted.

Preventive Action

(d) Monitor and inspect walls. Get them fixed as soon as staff notice a fault.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was provided.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 29 - Premises has been adequately addressed.