

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2020FL004 | | |
| Name of Service: | St Brigid's Montessori School | | |
| Address of Service: | 5 Swords Manor Grove, Swords, Co. Dublin | | |
| Eircode: | K67 X4Y0 | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Andrea Behan | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 06/11/2025 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 15 | PM 6 |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15 | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | Y Kelly | | |
| 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

St Brigid's Montessori School is a sessional service owned and operated by the registered provider and located in a residential setting in Swords. The service consists of one care room, two sanitary facilities for children and an outdoor area to the rear of the premises. The service is registered to provide early childhood care and education for a maximum of 15 children aged from 3 to 6 years. Eligible children participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) from 8.45am to 11.45 in the morning session and 12:00 to 15:00 in the afternoon session from Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year.

Staffing

The registered provider and two other adults work directly with the children attending the sessional service. One staff member is employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme to reduce the adult child ratio. One staff member works directly with the children in the morning session and provides support where needed in the afternoon session and also carries out housekeeping duties.

Methodology

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Montessori Room. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15.

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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service at 09.30am and was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2) The files for 3 staff members including the registered provider were reviewed, references for 2 adults were reviewed and the following was recorded:

- (a) Two written validated references were available from past employers.
- (b) Two written validated references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 3 staff members whose files were reviewed. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice

requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) International Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 3 staff members whose files were reviewed and who may work directly with the children in the service 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, Disability and Equality.

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

(3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 3 adults, including the registered provider working with 15 children aged 2 years and 10 months to 4 years and 10 months on the morning of the inspection one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. There were 2 adults, including the registered provider working with six children aged 2 years and 10 months to 3 years and 9 months on the afternoon of the inspection.

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) On review of a sample of 12 children's registration records, the required information and details were available. The following information was included:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child.
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service.
- (c) a provision for the date the child ceased to attend the service.
- (d) the name and address of an emergency contact of the child that can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service.
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child.
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

Non-Compliance Information

On review of 12 children's registration records, 11 children's registration records included the following, however 1 child's registration record did not include the following:

(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.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(f)(g)(h) The parent was given the page from the registration form to complete. It was returned within a couple of days and added to the registration form.

Preventive Action

(f)(g) This was added to the 'Staff Duties' list.

(h) So that this does not occur again, a second staff member has been delegated to recheck all pages of registration forms to ensure they are complete.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Evidence of missing page of child's registration record.
- 'Staff Duties' list amended.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 15 have been 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 in the service:

Basic needs:

- Children's snack and water bottles were brought from home. Snack consisted of ham sandwiches, rolls, rice cakes, waffles, pasta, yoghurts and fruit. Children's water bottles were accessible to the children and stored on a shelf in the room.
- There was a cosy area in the service and children were observed sitting and relaxing in this area when they chose.
- Children's independence was supported. Children were free to move around the room and choose materials independently and tidied these away when they had finished their activity. Children also used the bathroom independently with staff support as needed.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children and children were given praise and encouragement. Children were offered comfort and support when needed. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service.
- Staff were observed to respond to and support children's ideas, for example staff supported children with a Montessori activity which became a game in relation to finding numbers and marking these off when they were found. Each child was given a role in this game and staff were observed interacting with children at their level and using open ended questions, "What do you think, will we leave it there or keep looking?"
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there were baby photographs of the children displayed on the wall and the children's paintings were displayed in the service.
- Staff discussed that they communicate and share information with parents using an online messaging application. A parents evening is held at the beginning of the term with parents of new children and

parents are invited into the service throughout the year, before Halloween and at Christmas time for a Christmas jumper day.

- The staff members were observed greeting parents at the door at collection time where they exchanged information about the child's day in the service.

Programme of Activities:

- Discussions with staff and observation ascertained that there is a Montessori curriculum in place with elements of play. Children's progression in learning is recorded in relation to geography and arithmetic, language and sounds.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; the children engaged well with tidying up, putting items away independently. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.
- There were opportunities for children to engage in sensory play such as painting and water play activities chosen by the children.
- Staff facilitated a circle time before home time and sang action songs with the children.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- There was age-appropriate furniture with child sized chairs and tables for children to sit whilst they played or for mealtimes.
- There was a variety of Montessori shelves and materials, which were accessible to children. These included the following: Language shelf with Montessori letters and sound boxes, Sensory area with a small table with boxes of a variety of textures. There were Montessori materials such as wooden cylinders, pink tower, rods, spindle boxes for early numeracy development and practical life resources such as dressing frames and pouring and spooning activities. There were Montessori Geography materials to include a world map, flags and an atlas. There were Montessori shapes, paper and colour coded pencils to provide opportunities for early literacy and mark making. There were art materials such as paint and paint brushes, pencils, stencils and scissors to support creative art and mark making for children.
- There was a cosy area for children to relax with 2 child sized armchairs, cushions and a variety of books to provide opportunities for storytelling and children's language development.

- There was a table with small world materials to include a wooden farmhouse with animals and wooden toy food for dramatic and pretend play for children.
- An outdoor play area was available for children. The equipment and materials included a large climbing frame with a soft mat underneath, a small climbing frame structure, a slide and wooden see-saw, which promoted gross motor and fundamental movement skills. The small climbing frame structure contained a cubby area inside with a soft mat, kitchen and real items including phones which provided an area to relax and provided opportunities for dramatic play. In addition, there was a toy washing machine and small world toys including box of dinosaurs and a dolls house for pretend play. There was a separate area for children to engage in sensory play containing a wooden structure with pipes and funnels for water play, a gravel pit and a sand pit. There were transportation toys which supported children to move materials around the outdoor environment and promoted opportunities for schematic play.
- The children also have access to outdoor play in the front garden of the service. This area contained a playhouse, tuff tray and tyres with dinosaurs.

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:

- On arrival to the service, the inspector observed that the door was secure and monitored by staff.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The large outdoor play area to the rear of the service was fully enclosed and secured and was mainly surfaced with artificial grass in addition to paved footpaths.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was observed to be stored safely out of the reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled water and liquid hand soap were available in the sanitary facilities.
- Children lunch which was brought from home, were refrigerated to prevent spoiling of perishable items.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of an emergency evacuation.
- There were fire drill procedures displayed in the care room of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Two Garda vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Administration of Medication:

2. There was no written health care plan available for 1 child who required medication who was in attendance on the day of inspection. It is acknowledged that the medication was stored safely in the care room out of children's reach and available to adults as required in the event of an emergency.

Infection Control:

3. Infection control measures were not always followed in the service. The possible risk of the spread of infection was increased due to the following:
 - One singular hand towel was in use in each sanitary accommodation the absence of paper towels or other more hygienic systems for hand drying. There was a hand towel dispenser in both toilets, however these were both empty. The use of a singular hand towel reduces the effectiveness of good handwashing practice, therefore increasing the risk of cross-contamination.

A non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 in relation to infection control was identified at the last inspection on the 6 October 2023. The corrective actions submitted following that inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

- Pedal bins were not available for disposal of waste and contaminated items in either of the children's sanitary accommodation.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting disclosures for 2 staff members have been received and added to the staff files.

Administration of Medication:

2. Medicine Consent Form sourced on the day of inspection. The form was given to the parent, who completed and returned it. It is stored in the medical box with child's medicine.

Infection Control:

3. A new company has been sourced, and paper towels are in both bathrooms. A regular delivery of supplies has been set up. Children are also given their own small hand towel which they hang on a hook on back of their chair and use when needed. New pedal bins are placed in each bathroom.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Record of dates to be kept on the wall with expiry date highlighted and date to begin process of renewal included. Using the new staff duties check list, certificates etc will be checked regularly so that dates will not be overlooked again.

Administration of Medication:

2. Blank copies of Medicine Consent Form stored in first aid box.

Infection Control:

3. Added to 'Staff Duties' list. A new hand-washing policy has been created in partnership with the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Garda vetting disclosures for 2 staff members.
- Training certificate in relation to Garda vetting.
- Medicine Consent Form.
- Photographs of hand towels, paper towels and pedal bins.
- 'Staff Duties' list.
- Handwashing Policy.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that an attendance book of each pre-school child attending is kept in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The details of all 15 children had not been accurately recorded in the attendance book.

- The children had been marked in attendance for the 5 November, the day before the inspection. The children had not been marked in attendance on the 5 November. It is acknowledged that this was rectified when the inspector brought this to the attention of staff at 10.00am.
- One child in attendance in the morning session was marked in as attending at 12.45pm.

Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children in an emergency.

A non-compliance identified under Regulation 24 was identified at the last inspection on the 6 October 2023. The corrective actions submitted following that inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1) The manager will take roll call at the door while a second staff member welcomes the children into the school. The roll call book will be rechecked when all children have settled by a second staff member. Roll call error was human error on that day and completely overlooked. Rechecking of roll completion will rectify this.

Preventive Action

(1) Roll book is now stored at a box close to school door entrance.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographic evidence of roll book.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 24 have been 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

- (1) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and a staff member trained in FAR was available on the premises throughout the opening hours of the service. The registered provider was trained in First Aid Response (FAR), who was present on the day of the inspection.
- (2)(a) An adequately stocked first aid box was observed in the care room of the service.
- (b) The first aid box was stored out of the reach of the children but available to staff as needed.

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) The registered provider ensured the following:

(a) A record of monthly fire drills was available on the premises with the last drill dated as having been carried out on 22 October 2025.

(b) The number, type and maintenance record for the firefighting equipment was available. Firefighting equipment was last serviced in October 2025.

(4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the care room of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(b) An up-to-date record was not available of the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises.

A non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 was identified at the last inspection on the 6 October 2023. The corrective actions submitted following that inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(b) The Fire Safety Officer returned to rectify this matter. Signatures were in the fire safety book. The Fire Safety Officer signed again on the day.

Preventive Action

(b) The fire safety book has pages marked for future inspection. The Fire Officer is due to return to service at the beginning of next years' school term. This is also marked in diary and checklist.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Evidence of Fire Officer checks of the smoke alarm.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. It is acknowledged that the registered provider has taken action in relation to the smoke alarm maintenance records. However, as the smoke alarm maintenance certificate has not yet been submitted, the non-compliance under Regulation 26 (1) (b) in relation to the smoke alarm still remains outstanding. It is the responsibility of the registered provider to furnish the smoke alarm maintenance certificate to the inspectorate when received.