

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021LS022SA
Name of School Age Service:	Darling Buds Montessori & Daycare
Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Walshe
Address of School Age Service:	8 The Garden Village Mountmellick Road, Portlaoise Laois
Eircode:	R32HX66

Date of Inspection:	4 December 2025			
Number of school age children present during inspection:	AM	Not applicable	PM	7
Registration status:	Registered			
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable			

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co. Offaly R35K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	A Spain
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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Authority to Inspect

Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:

Darling Buds Montessori & Daycare school age service is part of a combined early years and school age service, located in a standalone, two-storey, adapted premises. The school age service cares for children aged 4 to 10 years between 1.30 and 6.00pm. A breakfast club is offered between the hours of 8.00 and 9.00am. The service is located in a residential housing estate on the outskirts of Portlaoise town. The school age service is located in a room at first floor level which is also used for a morning ECCE service and part-time childcare in the early years service. A second playroom, an office and sanitary accommodation for both children and staff are also located at first floor level. Enclosed outdoor play areas are provided at both the side and the back of the building.

Staffing:

The service is staffed by three adults. An additional adult is available in a management capacity and does not work directly with the children. The registered provider does not work directly in the service.

Additional Information:

The inspection was conducted as a result of information received by the inspectorate.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- a) caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- b) provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- c) the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in relation to:

- Regulation 8(1)(a)(b)(c)(d): Vetting disclosures.
- Regulation 9(1)(2)(4): Staffing levels.
- Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service.
- Regulation 12: Insurance.
- Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a): Complaints.
- Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Act, 2013.

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be non-compliant in relation to:

- Regulation 8(2): Vetting disclosures.

Conclusion and follow up actions:

The registered provider submitted actions to correct and prevent the recurrence of the non-compliance identified under Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures. This has been accepted by the inspectorate and is deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.*
- (2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

The inspector reviewed the file of one new staff member employed to work in the school age service. It was acknowledged that the person in charge and two additional staff members were included in the staff complement for the early years service.

(1)(a)(b)

Two references from reputable sources were available for the new staff member.

(c)

A Garda vetting disclosure was held on file in respect of the staff member. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in respect of the staff member.

(d)

Police clearance was not required as the staff member had not lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as an adult.

Regulatory Requirement not met

(2)

Documented evidence was not available to confirm that the necessary vetting procedures in relation to validation of references was conducted prior to appointment of the staff member to work in the service. It was acknowledged that confirmation that references were validated subsequent to the inspection was submitted to the inspector on 10 December 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

(2)

As a corrective measure, two validated references were submitted by the registered provider for a new staff member employed to work in the school age service. As a preventive measure, the registered provider advised in the CAPA 2 response to the inspection report, submitted on 16 January 2026, that going forward, references for new staff members will be validated prior to the staff members taking up employment in the service.

Summary of Findings

The non-compliance found on inspection has been adequately addressed.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- (4) A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)

An adequate number of adults cared for the number of combined preschool and school age children in room ECCE 2 on the second floor of the service.

At 2.20pm, three adults cared for a total of 4 school age children and 9 preschool children 4 to 5 years of age in room ECCE 2.

At 3.10 pm, three adults cared for 6 school age children and 8 preschool children aged 4 to 5 years old in room ECCE 2.

At 3.55pm, three adults cared for the 7 school age children remaining in the ECCE 2 room. A sign in and out sheet was observed to be in use in the ECCE 2 room to sign in children on arrival from schools by bus and on collection by parents and guardians.

A review of the attendance records for the school age service confirmed that a maximum of 9 school age children are currently in attendance on any one day in the service.

(2)

The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 school age children was maintained on the day of inspection.

(4)

Children were observed to be appropriately supervised on arrival from school, at snack time, while playing and reading books in the room and while relaxing on the couch provided.

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the policies and statements specified in Schedule 6 are in place for the service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The inspector reviewed the Managing behaviour policy for the service. The policy was observed to be in compliance with the requirements of regulation 10. The person in charge advised that all staff receive the policies and procedures for the service as part of their induction and provided a

sample induction checklist to the inspector to illustrate the areas covered with staff on induction, which included the policies and procedures for the service.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 66 children in daily attendance in the service. Insurance cover was valid from the 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.

Regulation 13: Complaints

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies—*
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that—*
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the school age service, and*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The service had a complaints policy which outlined the procedure for making a complaint, the manner in which complaints were dealt with and the procedure for keeping the complainant informed on the manner in which complaints were dealt with. The policy outlined a procedure for making both formal and informal complaints and included a review procedure should the

complainant be unhappy with the outcome of the investigation. A child friendly version of the complaints policy was available for children in attendance in the service.

(2)(a)

The person in charge advised that no complaints were received in relation to the school age service.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service submitted minutes of a staff meeting held with service managers on 3 September 2025. Meeting notes advised that the behaviour management policy was to be given to all staff to read and the importance of the policy was emphasised.