

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022FL004			
Name of Service:	Bremore Castle Montessori			
Address of Service:	14 Bremore Castle, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin			
Eircode:	K32 E024			
Name of Registered Provider:	Sinead Lawlor			
Service type:	Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	24/09/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	5
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6			
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle			
Title:	Early Years Inspector			
Authority to Inspect				
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).				
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.			

Description of service

Bremore Castle Montessori is a sessional Early Years service located in Balbriggan, County Dublin offering early childhood care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme with children attending for sessional care from 9am to 12 midday or between 12:30pm and 3:30pm each weekday for 38 weeks each year. The service is conducted from a designated preschool room with its own entrance door located directly adjacent to the registered providers family home. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The service employs 3 staff members including the registered provider who works directly with the children on a daily basis. On the day of inspection, the registered provider and one core staff member were present in 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 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, 19,23, 25 and 26; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff member 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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service.

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

The files for 3 staff members including the registered provider and 2 staff members who work directly with the children were reviewed.

(2)(a) The following references were available from a previous employer.

One written reference was available for the registered provider.

Two validated written references were available for 1 staff member

(b) The following references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

One written reference was available for the registered provider.

Two validated written references were available for 1 staff member.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 3 staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) Two staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service, and each held appropriate childcare qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) International police vetting was not available for 2 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(3) Following a review of the staff files it was apparent that the following information was not available for staff members who worked directly with the children in advance of them commencing employment in the service: Police vetting procedures were not available for 2 staff members.

(4) One staff member whose file was reviewed and who works directly with children in the service did not have evidence on file of having an appropriate childcare qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(d) & (3) Two staff members produced their police vetting. They are now in their files.

(4) Staff member sent her qualification to registered provider. She graduated in June. It is now in her file.

Preventive Action

(d)& (3) Always check staff files are up to date.

(4) Always check staff files are up to date and new qualifications are on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two validated written references.

Qualification for 1 staff member.

Summary Comment

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(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)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

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 ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- There were 11 pre-school children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8)(c) Not applicable as the service does not operate single handedly.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

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

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

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

Basic needs:

- Throughout the inspection, the children were engaged in play-based activities in the care room and in the outdoor play area. The staff present joined in with the children's play, providing encouraging and nurturing interactions to children and supporting them to locate and set up materials to enhance their play. The children were comfortable and confident to make choices about their learning, and the staff members were responsive to the children's ideas and requests.
- The children brought their own snack with them from home, one of the children requested snack earlier because he was hungry and with this was facilitated with ease. Snack time was observed to be relaxed and social, children were nominated as helpers and assisted in handing out lunches and water bottles. Both staff members sat with the children while they ate chatting with the children and engaging them in conversation.
- The children used the toilets independently with gentle reminders, supervision and assistance provided when needed. The children's independence was supported when putting on their coats to go outside.
- The layout of the care rooms enabled the children to move around the spaces freely and access the available play materials. The children's photographs and artwork were displayed in the care room, reflecting the children's identity, and encouraging children's sense of belonging in the service.
- A comfortable rest area was available with a child sized armchair and floor mat located alongside a library area for the children to rest and relax as they chose throughout the session.
- Children's behaviour and achievements were positively reinforced with recognition, praise and encouragement by both staff members. Staff were observed promoting positive behaviour through the use of simple rules that children could understand and follow, encouraging children to develop strategies to deal with their own behaviour and that of others.

- All of the children were provided with the opportunity to spend extended time in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- A welcoming atmosphere in the service was evidenced by the staff members greeting children, parents, and guardians in a friendly manner in the service. It was also evident through discussion with the staff members that they were working with parents when they identified when a child may need additional resources to meaningfully engage in the service, taking account of each child's individual needs and preferences.
- Interactions were responsive, warm, and affectionate between the staff members and the children in the service. Staff members were heard using soft tones of voice and appeared interested and enthusiastic when engaging with the children, the theme of the week was 'All about our families' and this was reflected in the circle time activity with staff and children sharing information about their individual families and in the stories that were read to the children.
- Transitions were well supported in the service. A pictorial display of the daily routine and activities was on display at the children's eye level in the care rooms. Verbal strategies including signposting and tidy-up-themed songs were used by the staff members to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities including snack time and indoor and outdoor play and activities.

Physical and material environment:

- The care room was bright and welcoming, with the play materials and equipment accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play.
- The care room was laid out in clearly defined interest areas to prompt and support children to engage in self-directed and imaginative play. Interest areas included a role play area which encompassed a well-resourced play kitchen and dress up materials, arts and crafts area, construction resources, transport toys and a wide range of tabletop items with each area suitably resourced with supportive play materials that were stored on low-level open fronted shelving which were accessible to the children.
- The children's language development was supported through the availability of a wide range of books, and this was enhanced by conversation and the stories that were read to the children.
- A variety of sensorial play experiences were facilitated in the care room including paint and craft materials, playdough in addition to a large sand tray that was available in the outdoor play area.

- An enclosed outdoor area is available at the rear of the service. A well-resourced mud kitchen with a variety of pot, pans and accessorial toys was provided, a bench with cushions was located alongside this area for the children to use. A wooden boat with steps and a slide provided the children with the opportunity for physical play, a balance beam was available to encourage the children in risky play. A variety of planting boxes were provided to enable the children to participate in planting and gardening activities.

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 premises and outdoor play area were appropriately secured. This prevented a child from exiting the service unsupervised and unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The water temperature in the care room and sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation to support effective hand hygiene procedures in the service.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children were gently reminded, and assisted, when necessary, to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition and up to date documented cleaning schedules were available in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed being administered on the day.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drills occurred on a monthly basis to familiarise both staff and children with safe evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*
- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
 - (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Compliance Information

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of 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. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 14/10/2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

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

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(b) An appointment was made straight away. Fire extinguishers were serviced. Registered provider is still waiting on smoke alarms appointment.

Preventive Action

(b) Check maintenance records for smoke alarms & fire extinguishers records.

Supporting documentation submitted

Maintenance certificate for the fire extinguisher.

Confirmation of appointment for servicing of smoke alarms.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 26 - Fire safety measures has been reviewed and accepted. The registered provider has stated that she will forward the maintenance certificate for the smoke alarms once the servicing has been completed.