

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019CC002
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Name of Service:	Blackbrook Montessori and Daycare
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Address of Service:	Blackbrook House, Templeuisque, Upper Glanmire, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T23 D662
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Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Short
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Service type:	Childminder
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Date of Inspection:	05/04/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	3	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork.
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
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

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Description of service

Blackbrook Montessori and Daycare is a registered childminding service for children aged two to six years. However, it currently accommodates children aged two and a half to five and a half years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is facilitated from 9.30am to 12.30pm, each Monday to Friday. Registered hours of operation are between 7.30am and 6.00pm daily. School going children are also accommodated.

Situated in a rural area of upper Glanmire in Co. Cork, the service is provided from a converted garage, adjoining the childminder's private residence and consists of two interconnecting care rooms, sanitary facilities and a kitchen. At the front of the premises, an outdoor play space is available for the children's use.

Staffing

The childminder employs one staff member, who is also the nominated emergency contact, to assist in the event of an emergency. Both adults hold a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of the child, safety and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

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.

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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 childminder was the person in charge of operating the service and a deputy person in charge had also been assigned.
- (b) When the unannounced inspection commenced, the deputy was working at the setting and the registered provider was available in the adjoining premises. Both adults remained to facilitate the inspection process thereafter.

(2) & (4)

The childminder confirmed that no new staff members had commenced employment at the service since the previous inspection was undertaken on 16 September 2021. Therefore, parts (2)(a),(b),(c), (d) and (4) were not assessed.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

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

(b) a childminder shall ensure that a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the childminder in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the childminder in the event of an emergency

Compliance Information

(8)

(b) The nominated second adult who could be contacted in the event of an emergency, worked at the service.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 12 - Childminders

(1) A childminder shall ensure that-

(a) there are no more than 5 pre-school children in his or her care at any given time, including his or her own pre-school children,

(b) subject to paragraph (2), there are no more than 2 children under the age of 15 months in his or her care at any given time, including his or her own pre-school children, and

(c) there is a working telephone on the premises.

(2) A childminder may have more than 2 children under the age of 15 months in his or her care at any given time where all such children are siblings of each other.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The number of early years children in attendance at the service did not exceed five. Three children were present on the day of inspection and a total of five pre-school children were enrolled.

(b) The three children were aged four and a half to five years. The childminder is not registered to cater for children under the age of two years.

(c) A working phone was easily accessible in the service.

(2) Not applicable, as none of the children who attended were aged less than 15 months.

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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;

Compliance Information

(1)

(h) Children's daily attendance records were maintained and presented for review.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

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

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- A mid-morning snack was facilitated at 10.35am, during which children were afforded sufficient time to enjoy their food in a relaxed, unhurried environment. The inspector was advised that breakfast was available from 7.30am as required, lunch was typically served at 1.30pm and that an afternoon snack was provided at 4.00pm. It was also reported that snacks were available in between meals for any child who may become hungry.
- Children's independence was encouraged and supported when accessing the adjacent sanitary facility for toileting and handwashing.
- Care of the indoor environment was promoted. For example, one child was observed to fold the blankets which had been laid out on the floor mat and later in the morning, the children were encouraged to tidy up the materials that they had been working with, before getting ready for the mid-morning snack.

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- A calm and nurturing atmosphere was evident in the setting throughout the morning. The adults were observed to communicate with the children in a kind and patient manner, participated in activities when invited by the children and promptly responded to their requests for assistance.
- Adequate space was available between the care rooms to meet the children's mobility needs, as they explored their environment. Outdoor play was not observed at the time of inspection, due to wet weather conditions.

Physical and material environment:

- The interconnecting care rooms were laid out in consideration of the children's needs, with play resources displayed at their eye level and easily accessible.
- The children's birthdays were represented on a wall display in the inner care room, along with samples of their recently completed artwork and colourful learning charts, which helped to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Suitably sized tables and chairs were in place to accommodate a range of table top activities and meal breaks.
- The variety of equipment and materials on offer supported key developmental areas such as language, cognition, fine motor skills and creativity. For example, interest items included a broad selection of books, jigsaws, connectable shapes, art and craft supplies, two fully furnished dolls houses, a play kitchen, a tuft tray with multi coloured dried rice and pasta and a range of Montessori equipment, which promoted practical life skills and early numeracy.
- Outdoors, the play environment facilitated increased mobility, exploration and the extension of gross motor skills. Ride on toys, slides, goal posts, and a seesaw were available, along with large connectable waffle shapes, a play kitchen and a playhouse.

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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-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (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.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The layout of the care rooms, together with the variety and quantity of materials accessible, supported the children to engage in age-appropriate individual and small group play. The outdoor environment was also noted to be adequately equipped to cater for the number and age range of the children who attended the service, with opportunities provided for active play and movement.
 - (b) Children's need for rest and relaxation was met through the provision of a suitable rest area in the care room. This comprised a large floor mat, with cushions and blankets, which were positioned next a well-stocked bookshelf. A stackable bed and linen were held in easily accessible storage, should any of the children require sleep while in attendance.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- A Healthy Eating policy had been developed.
- The children's meals and snacks were supplied by their parents or guardians and were refrigerated and reheated as necessary in the service.
- On the day of inspection, the mid-morning snack was observed to include sandwiches, bagels, rice cakes, cheese, yogurt, oranges and blueberries, with water to drink.
- Drinking water was available to the children and was observed to be provided in between mealtimes.
- The inspector was advised that none of the children had any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

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

At the time of inspection, the following was noted through a combination of:

- direct observation and discussion with staff
- examination of relevant documentation

General Safety:

- Access to the service was via a key locked door, which reduced the risk of unauthorised persons gaining entry.
- The outdoor play space was enclosed by a combination of walls, hedging and a secured gate, which minimised the likelihood of a child exiting, while unsupervised.
- There were no cables or flexes accessible to the children.
- Posters were in place on the low-level glass panels on the entrance door, to create visibility markings.
- Firefighting equipment was tethered.

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- Some of the low-lying kitchen cupboards were fitted with restrictive opening devices, which prevented the children from accessing hazardous items.

Infection Control:

- Good hand hygiene was supported through the availability of warm running water, liquid soap and disposable paper towels at the wash hand basins in both the children's and adults' sanitary areas. The children were observed to wash their hands before beginning their mid-morning snack.
- The service's programme of cleaning was displayed on the care room wall and cleaning records were also maintained.
- Refrigerated storage was ensured for the children's perishable meals and snacks.
- Suitable, labelled storage was in place for the children's coats and personal belongings.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.
- The inspector was informed that none of the children enrolled had been prescribed specific medication.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were observed to sleep during the period of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit was observed to be free from obstruction.

Outings:

- Not applicable, as the childminder advised that outings were not undertaken.

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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 firefighting 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) The monthly fire drills conducted at the service were documented and maintained on file. It was noted that the most recent fire drill was undertaken on 6 March 2023.
 - (b) A list of the number and type of firefighting equipment was in place. Maintenance records from a fire safety company indicated that the firefighting equipment was last serviced on 3 August 2022 and that the wired smoke alarm was tested on 6 July 2022.
- (4) The service's written fire evacuation procedure was prominently displayed on the wall of the care room, along with an evacuation plan, which pertained to the layout of the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A current certificate of insurance was available and valid until 27 March 2024, with adequate insurance cover for 11 children, including school age children.