

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE087
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Name of Service:	Little Pals Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Crossmore, Knockalough, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 XP29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Pauline Hickey
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	25 January 2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Tusla, Ennis Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare V95TY4E
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Ní Nialláin
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

Little Pals Montessori Pre-school first opened in 1997 as a sessional Early Years' Service. The service caters for up to a maximum number of 22 pre-school children, between the ages of 2- 6 years. The service is open Monday-Thursday 09.15hrs - 12.45hrs.

Staffing

The registered provider operated the sessional service assisted by two adults who were present on the day when the inspection was carried out.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 25, 26, and 28.

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

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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.

Additional Information

Not applicable.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, adults 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,*

(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*

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(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.

(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-

(a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and

(b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of "paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)" for "paragraphs (5) and (6)", and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): "

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1)(a) On the day of the inspection, the registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the designated person in charge was present on the premises. The staff roster indicated that the designated person or her deputy were always available on site.

(2)(a) Three written references from past employers were available for some of the staff members.

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(b) Where past employer references were not available, three references from reputable sources were provided.

(c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda

Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for three adults working in the service.

(d) Not applicable as no adult had lived outside the state for a period greater than six months.

(4) Three adults working in the service held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

(6)(a) Not applicable as the qualification exemption for staff retiring by September 2021 was expired.

(b) Not applicable as the granting of an exemption to the requirement for a qualification under the Early Childhood Care and Education had expired.

(6A) Not applicable as the qualification exemption for an adult employed under the Access and Inclusion Model had not been sought.

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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.

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

(c) a registered provider of a 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 were three adults working with fourteen pre-school children. The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection. The adult/child ratio in the service was correct.
- (3) The staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.
- (8) (c) Not applicable as the service was not operated single-handedly, three adults were available in the service.

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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-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The service maintained an adequate record for each child attending the service, in accordance with Regulation 15(1) (a) to (i).
- (3)(a) Parents/guardians had access to all information and written records relating to their own child.
- (b) Records were available to the authorised person in the service.
- (c) Records were open and available for inspection to the Tusla Early Years Inspector.

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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

Basic Needs of the Infants & Children

- There was a healthy eating policy in the service. The parents supplied all the snacks and drinks for their child. Drinking water was provided to the children throughout the session.
- Personal care was carried out as required in a hygienic manner.
- Hand washing was observed with the children and by the adults.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the playroom and they also had the use of a safely enclosed outdoor play area to the rear and side of the premises.
- The adults were caring and considerate in their dealings with the pre-school children present. Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner and explanations and encouragement of appropriate behaviour was offered by the staff throughout the inspection.

Physical & Material Environment

- The indoor environment was comfortable, welcoming, and safe and provided a good range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children. Suitable seating was provided for the children and the adults.
- The play materials and equipment were freely available and accessible to the children on low level shelving. Educational posters, family photos and children's creations were wall mounted and displayed at children's eye level.
- Play equipment and materials were grouped to provide specific interest areas and appealing places for children to play and explore. Some of these included a home corner, a construction area, a library area with a soft seating area adjacent for relaxation, a dress-up area, a jig-saw area and a painting and arts and crafts area, a dolls house with small figures and other accessories. A supply of Montessori equipment was also available.
- The playroom was carefully laid out and decorated.
- An outdoor play area was provided to the rear and side of the playschool. It consisted of a large play environment with an all-weather and concrete ground surface. There was a newly erected shelter with natural light coming in through the roof. The outdoor area had various transport vehicles, sand and water play, dolls with accessories, a nature table and planting area, a wooden kitchen with accessories. There was

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fixed play equipment which included a climbing and activity centre and balancing beams. The children played outdoors for most of the inspection.

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 gate and door into the service was secured thus preventing children from exiting the premises unsupervised and prohibiting unauthorised persons from entering the service. The outdoor play was secured. There were no hazards identified in the indoor or outdoor environments. Children were actively supervised by the childcare staff.

Infection Control:

Hand washing with the children was observed and encouraged after toileting, after outdoor play and prior to eating. The premises were clean and well maintained and cleaning programmes were observed.

Administration of Medication:

No medication either prescription or non-prescription medication was administered to children on the day of inspection. Measures were in place to administer medication if required.

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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) Two adults held valid First Aid Responder certificates which were valid to the 17th of November 2024. One adult held a valid Paediatric First Aid cert which was valid to 20th of October 2024.

(2)(a) There was a fully equipped first aid box stored in a designated first aid storage area which was easily accessible.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children always attending the pre-school service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Records were available to show that fire drills were carried out monthly on the premises. The last fire drill took place on the 12th of December 2022.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance cover was available for up to 17 pre-school children attending the service. The policy was valid until the 27th of November 2023.