# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report
# Pre School

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| **TUSLA Identifier:** | TU2015LK193 |
| **Name of Service:** | Whitethorns Montessori |
| **Address of Service:** | 3 St Nessans Park<br>Dooradoyle<br>Limerick |
| **Eircode:** | V94 NY65 |
| **Name of Registered Provider:** | Laura O'Brien |
| **Service type:** | Sessional |
| **Date of Inspection:** | 23/04/2026 |

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| **No of pre-school children:** | AM | 9 | PM | 6 |

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| **Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** | Tusla Early Years Inspectorate<br>2nd Floor Estuary House<br>Henry Street<br>Limerick |
| **Inspection undertaken by:** | J Ryan |
| **Title:** | Early Years Inspector |

| **Authority to Inspect** |
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| 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). |

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## Description of service

This registered montessori preschool provides sessional care and education to preschool children aged 2.5 years to 5 years of age. The service operates two sessions each day from 09.00 - 12.00hrs and from 12.30 – 15.30hrs for 38 weeks a year and the setting caters for a maximum of 22 children per session. The curriculum is play based and is located in a domestic dwelling in an urban area. The service has an outdoor play area located at the rear of the premises where children have access to outdoor play equipment. There are three playrooms in the service which children rotate between.

## Staffing

The service has a designated person in charge and all staff employed in the service have childcare qualifications.

## 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 the following regulations

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of the child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of the child

Regulation 25 - First aid

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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 |
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| **Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment** |
| *(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-*<br>*(a)the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*<br>*(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*<br><br>*(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-*<br>*(a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*<br>*(b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*<br>*(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*<br>*(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.*<br>*(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) There was a named person in charge, and a deputy was available to deputise if required.<br>(b) During the period of the inspection the person in charge was present and the staff roster indicated that the person in charge or the deputy were available on the premises each day.<br>(2) The files of 4 staff members working in the service were reviewed.<br>(a) There were 6 written references submitted by staff from previous employers on file of which all had been validated.<br>(b) There was 2 written and validated reference submitted by staff from sources other than past employers.<br>(c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for all four staff employed to work in the service. The service adhered to the re-vetting |

timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for a member of staff who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The four staff members present on the day had appropriate childcare qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

**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.*

**Compliance Information**

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 4 staff working with and supervising 9 preschool children present in the morning session. There were 2 staff working with and supervising 6 children present in the afternoon session. The minimum ratio of staff to children was maintained and an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

**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**

There was a healthy eating policy in place. The snacks which were supplied by the service were observed to be nutritious and varied and consisted of crackers, cheese and a selection of fruit. Bottled water was available in the room should a child become thirsty. Children moved from the playrooms to the dining area in the kitchen to eat their snacks.

Children's hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to.

Children used the toilet facilities independently or accompanied by a staff member if necessary. Hygienic hand washing was observed to be completed by both children and staff at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation which had a supply of liquid soap, paper hand towels and hot water.

Children were allowed to move freely indoors between three rooms and from one activity to the next for specific periods of time. Facilities for quiet time were available in the room if required by children.

Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner using a problem-solving approach.

Facilities for outdoor play were available and used by the children on the day of the inspection. There was a grass area and patio area containing a swing set, slides, child sized picnic benches, a farm area, a dinosaur area, a fairy garden and flower beds which the children helped plant. Risky play was observed as children were observed climbing on low level branches of trees in the garden.

**PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:**

This outdoor sessional service was operated from the large back garden of the dwelling with outdoor sanitary accommodation and a wash hand basin.

Adequate and varied play equipment suited to the age and stage of development of the child was available in the service and in the outdoor play area.

The outside area was spacious and bright with trees for climbing and surrounded by walls and fences. Defined interest areas included a reading area, mud kitchen, farm, flower garden, bug hotel, land of dinosaurs, land of reptiles, a jungle, slides, swings, fairy door/magic area, tyres, gravel area and herb garden.

## 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:**

- Entrance and exit doors were secured to prevent children leaving the premises.
- Toxic substances were stored in the original labelled container in a safe and secure way, separate from stored medications and food, and were inaccessible to children.
- Fire doors were not obstructed and were clearly identified and easily opened from the inside.
- The play area at the rear of the building was secured by wall and gates.

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| Part VI - Safety |
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| **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.*<br>*(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*<br>*(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*<br>*(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.* |
| **Compliance Information** |
| (1) On the day of the inspection there was one member of staff who held current certification in first aid responder for children.<br>(2)(a) A first aid box was stored in the playroom.<br>(b)The first aid box was available at all times if required by a child. |

| Part VI - Safety |
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| **Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures** |
| *(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*<br>*(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*<br>*(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*<br>*(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 fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place on 23/03/2026.<br>(b)The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently on 29/01/2026 and a record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the premises. The wired smoke alarm was serviced on 11/02/2026.<br>(4)A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the playroom. |

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| Part VI - Safety |
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| **Regulation 28 - Insurance** |
| *A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.* |
| **Compliance Information** |
| Adequate insurance was available to cover the number of children in attendance. |