

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH003
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Name of Service:	Abbey Montessori
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Address of Service:	Newtown Lodge, Newtown, Trim, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	C15 YC53
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Honer
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	29/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	46	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Swords Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell
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).

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Description of service

Abbey Montessori service operates from the ground floor of a residential property in Co. Meath. The service is registered to provide sessional care from 9.00 to 12.30pm. The service does not currently operate the registered 1.00 to 4.00pm session. The service is currently registered to accommodate a maximum number of 44 children. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The children have access five rooms, one of which is an outdoor cabin. There are kitchen area and sanitary facilities available. There is access to an outdoor area at the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children daily. The registered provider employs seven staff members who also work directly with the children.

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/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child, Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play, Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 25 – First, Regulation

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29 – Premises and Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements. However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 Notification of change in circumstances. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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.

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Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider had failed to submit an application and to be approved for a change of circumstances in relation to the maximum number of children that can be accommodated at any one time. The service was found to be operating outside of its approved registration status which permitted a maximum of 44 children attending at any one time. The attendance records indicated the following.

- 29 April 2026 46 children in attendance.
- 28 April 2026 46 children in attendance.
- 27 April 2026 47 children in attendance.
- 20 April 2026 45 children in attendance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that they will close for the summer and this minor increase in numbers will no longer be in place. In September 2026, 44 children are enrolled in Abbey Montessori. The waiting list is full, and parents have been notified that there is no available place for their children.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider in their corrective and preventive action plan have addressed the noncompliance. This will be reviewed on the next 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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) There was a designated person in charge of the service, and a named person to deputise in their absence.
- (b) Following discussion with the person in charge, and review of the staff roster it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.
- (c) On discussion with staff members and the registered provider, there was a clearly defined person and deputy person in charge to ensure lines of accountability.
- (2) On the day of inspection, the recruitment files of the registered provider and seven staff members were reviewed.

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- (a)(b) Two written reference available for the registered provider, and fourteen written and validated references were available for the seven staff members.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure, dated within the last three years, was available for all staff members and the registered provider.
- (d) International police vetting was not required for the registered provider or six staff members following a review of documentation available. The police vetting required for one staff member was available.
- (4) The registered provider and seven staff members employed to work directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of 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.*
- (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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (3) On the inspector's unannounced arrival, the adult child ratio was observed to be correct and remained so throughout the morning session. The following adult-to-child ratios, for children aged 3 to 5 years old, were observed:
- In the Yellow Room there was 1 staff member and 11 children.
 - In the Red Room there were 2 staff members and 10 children.
 - In the White Room there was 1 staff member and 8 children.
 - In the Green Room there were 2 members and 10 children.
 - In the Blue Room there 2 members and 7 children.

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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

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

Supporting relationships around children

The staff members were observed to interact kindly with the children within their care. Staff members engaged with children's play in a variety of different ways. Some staff members were observed chatting to children about their families and activities that they enjoyed. Another staff member was observed 'driving to the shops' with a small group of children in the outdoor play car in the Green room garden. The children and staff member discussed what they needed and planned meals during this play.

Children were encouraged to play with different peers as two rooms from the main building would play in the outdoor area together. The inspector observed a large group of children racing together on scooters, trikes and ride on toys, playing together from two different rooms.

Staff members spoke of supports in place for some of the children who required additional support. Staff were aware of individual goals and strategies required for support and these were observed being implemented by staff members. Individual equipment was available as required and a staff member described how this was used in the service and in conjunction with parents. Staff were observed helping children with small issues with peers and strategies observed reflected positive behaviour management. This was supported by daily communication with parents at drop off and collection.

Basic Needs

All children were also facilitated with outdoor play on a regular basis. The children had access to appropriate outdoor wear whilst they played outside, with staff discussing communications to parents regarding suncream. Children were able to use the sanitary facilities on an independent basis and were reminded by staff to use these sanitary facilities throughout the session. Children sat with peers and staff members whilst they ate their lunch and children were given the role of taking the lunches from the fridge to their peers.

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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 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 children had access to indoor areas, which provided sufficient space for the children to play and eat. There were tables and chairs available for the children alongside floor space to play with their peers.

The service had two large play areas available on site. One play area was directly accessible from the Green room, outdoor cabin. The children had access to large play equipment that was anchored and included climbing frames and slides. The children were observed playing with the mud kitchen and the water trough. Some children brought out indoor toys such as jigsaws and playhouses and played with them on the picnic benches available.

The other outdoor area was directly accessible for the main building. There was a large, paved area where children played races on scooters, trike and other ride on toys. Children were also planting and digging in the raised garden area. There were large climbing toys that the children played on. The children had access to dress up clothes, drawing and colouring materials and jigsaws in the outdoor area. Both areas were contained withing wooden fencing with a bolted gate.

(b) The sessional preschool had cosy areas available in each room. These consisted of small chairs and cushions alongside reading books to provide a restful space for children as required.

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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 service had a secure entrance to the service which was locked and this prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children.
- The inspector was requested to sign into the service, and a record of visitors was maintained.
- Emergency exits, hallways and the entrance to the service were clear of obstructions.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands after coming in from indoor play and before eating in the yellow and blue rooms. Staff in all rooms discussed appropriate hand-washing procedures.
- Warm water, soap and paper hand towels were available in both indoor and outdoor sanitary facilities available for the children.
- The children had access to tissues and were supported to independently use these for self-care and were reminded to wash their hands afterwards.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff members from the various rooms were aware of children who required emergency medication. During outdoor play the medication was brought outside and was easily accessible, with the care plan, to the staff members.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The registered provider did not ensure a risk of injury was minimised in relation to cleaning products. The inspector observed cleaning agents stored on a low container in a storage section of the Green room. Whilst there was a low partition to the storage area, the cleaning products were accessible to the children and presented a possible risk of injury.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider stated that the storage basket was placed at 5ft from the ground and was behind a door that is 4ft high. The cleaning products also have a closed safety lock. However, on the day of the inspection, removed the products and placed them inside a box with a lid, storing them on top of the teachers shelf.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photo of storage

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan, has addressed the noncompliance observed on inspection.

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) The registered provider ensured that a person trained in a First Aid Responder (FAR) course was available. There was one staff member with current FAR certification.

- (2)(a) (b) The first aid equipment was conspicuous and easily accessible to staff members. The first aid equipment available provided adequate resources in the event of a first aid emergency.

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Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) The inspector observed that following the previous inspection in March 2023, the registered provider had implemented the preventive actions in relation to the outdoor toilet. The toilet was fully enclosed and was accessible to the children in the green room, which was the outdoor cabin. There were small vents in two walls, and no foul odour was noted on inspection. There were also the four indoor sanitary facilities and handwash basins available to the children in the main building.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there was adequate floor space available in each room.

(2) The following was noted for the care rooms in use.

Name of Room	Floor space available in m ²	Maximum number of children	Adequate floor space
Yellow	30	11	Yes
Blue	24.72	10	Yes
Green (outdoor cabin)	24.94	11	Yes
White	16.92	9	Yes
Red	27.20	11	Yes