

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH196
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Name of Service:	The Montessori Story
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Address of Service:	24 Balrath Wood, Mullingar Road, Kells, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A82 KK29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lynda Carroll
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	06/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	15
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath.
Inspection undertaken by:	D.Murray
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

The Montessori Story provides a sessional service to children from 2 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The hours of operation are from 09:00 to 12:00 hours and from 12:30 to 15:30 hours. The service is situated in a residential area and is purpose built consisting of the following rooms:

Downstairs:

Front and Back room provide care and education to children from 2 years 8 months to 5 years.

New room facilitates the care of children from 2 years to 2 years 8 months.

Upstairs:

Front room provide care and education to children from 2 years 8 months to 5 years.

New room accommodates children 2 years to 2 years 8 months.

Other facilities in the service include sanitary areas, an office and a kitchen.

An outdoor space was located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager, deputy manager and 6 staff members. The registered provider does not work 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

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection 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, manager, deputy manager, staff 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.

(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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

Nine staff files were reviewed on the day of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b) Eighteen validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

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(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 9 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for 6 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) All staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) Three staff members were employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

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) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) On the day of inspection, the correct adult/child ratio was maintained.

Downstairs:

Front room had 2 adults with 8 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years.

Back room had 1 adult with 9 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years. Relief was available to this room to support transitions.

New room had 1 staff member with 3 children ranging in age from 2 years to 2 years 8 months.

Upstairs:

Front room had 1 staff member with 6 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years.

New room had 1 staff member with 5 children ranging in age from 2 years to 2 years 8 months.

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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

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic Needs of the Infants and Children:

- There was a relaxed and calm atmosphere in the service, and the adults were observed to speak kindly and respectfully to the children. The staff worked well together and supported each other during transitions. Children sought out staff members who readily acknowledged and praised the children's efforts and accomplishments.
- Staff members were responsive to the children's cues should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision provided and gentle reminders regarding hand washing.
- Children were observed engaging in tabletop activities, art and crafts and free play with children afforded the opportunity to choose and change activities if they so wish. The curriculum was child led with the themes being "Spring" and "Wildlife" with the children doing arts and crafts and planting sunflowers to reflect these themes.
- The children brought their own healthy lunches which they had at 11am. Lunch time was observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. There was lots of conversation and laughter observed between the staff and children with assistance provided as required.
- The service embraced outdoor play and learning. Children were observed enjoying outdoor play with both their peers and staff members. Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members worked closely with parents to provide a child centred approach to learning. The adult's demonstrated knowledge of the individual care needs of the children especially the children with additional needs. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those

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around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together. Children were comforted when they became upset with the staff adopting behavioural management strategies such as speaking to the child softly and promoting turn taking and sharing. Challenging behaviour when presented was dealt with in a calm and caring manner and the children responded well to distraction and re-direction.

- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated by the daily sharing of information at drop off and collection and weekly messages sent home by a software application. Each child had a “Scrapbook” which was sent home on a regular basis.

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-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day.
- (2) A registered provider-
- (a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or
- shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(b) Mats were available should a child needed to take a break from activities and rest.
- (2)(a) The outdoor space was enclosed by walls with 2 secure gates. The surface area consisted of grass and a cemented area.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- All care rooms were well resourced with play materials and equipment which were laid out in interest areas which were spacious and uncluttered. The play materials and equipment incorporated natural/sensorial materials, Montessori equipment, art and crafts, a range of suitable toys and books. Play

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materials and equipment were easily accessible on open shelving at the children's height which encouraged active engagement and involvement.

- Equipment in the outdoor space included planting boxes, mud kitchen with play equipment, ride on tricycles, wooden playhouse with slide and ladder, climbing frame, tyres, climbing tunnel, basketball stands and ball and a wooden shed for storage of additional play equipment.

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:

On the day of inspection both the indoor and outdoor environment appeared safe. The manager and staff members had a clear understanding of their role and range of responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children. Indoor and outdoor risk assessments were conducted on a daily basis.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The Garda vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Renewal application for Garda vetting has been made for the staff member.

All staff members Garda vetting's will be checked on a regular basis to ensure they are renewed every 3 years.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Evidence of application.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance.

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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) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 02/03/2026.
- (b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance record of the fire fighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms on the premises. The fighting equipment was last serviced in October 2025. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 29/04/2026.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in 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

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 43 children at any one time attending the service. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/11/2025 to the 27/11/2026.