

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX082
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Name of Service:	Little Scholars Montessori
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Address of Service:	Willows, Killeens, Wexford, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y35 PX09
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Name of Registered Provider:	Melissa McCormack
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	09/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	2
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Ferrybank, Wexford.
Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry
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	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

This full day care service is situated on the outskirts of Wexford town. It is operated from a premises which has been converted to provide a preschool service from a building adjacent to the registered provider's home. The service consists of two preschool rooms, toilets, nappy changing facilities, a kitchen and a large outdoor play area to the rear of the service. The service is registered to operate from Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 16:00 from September to June.

Staffing

There are four staff working in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children also. All staff held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on the following regulations:

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4),

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service,

Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (2),

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play,
Regulation 22 – Food and drink,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,
Regulation 25 First aid (1) (2) (a) (b),
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, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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)(b)

There was a designated person in charge when the inspector arrived. The registered provider arrived shortly after the inspector and remained in the service to facilitate the inspection.

(2) (a)(b)

Following a discussion with the registered provider and on review of documentation, it was established that there were four staff employed in the service including the registered provider. All files were reviewed on the day of inspection.

All required written references were available on file for three staff.

(c)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all four staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all staff members.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

All staff held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

There were two references available on file for one staff member which were not validated. All written references for staff working directly with the children are required to be validated before staff commence working in the service

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The references are now validated and available on file in the service. There is now a template in place to ensure all required documents are in place in the service prior to staff commencing work in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the template now in place to verify references was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

There were policies and procedures in place in the service specified in Schedule 5 of these regulations. Two policies were reviewed. The policy on infection control in the service was compliant.

Non-Compliance Information

The healthy eating policy had not been updated and did not contain the measures to ensure that sufficient, suitable and nutritious food and drink were available to each child depending on their age, development needs and specific dietary, cultural or religious requirements.

For example, the policy did not contain the number of snacks and hot meals required for parents to provide for children who were attending the service on a full times basis.

This non-compliance was found on the previous inspection in March 2025 and has not been rectified since the last inspection. A corrective and preventive response was submitted to the inspector following the last inspection.

Despite this submission it has not prevented a recurrence of the non-compliance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

There is now a healthy eating policy in place in the service. The policy has been shared with parents. The service will continue to encourage parents to provide healthy choices of food for their children.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the healthy eating policy now in place was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1)

There was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the preschool service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

At 10:15, there were 14 children aged 2 to 6 years of age in the care of 2 staff.

At 13:00, there were 2 children aged 2 to 6 years of age in the care of 2 staff.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Non-Compliance Information

There was no system in place to inform parents of a child proposing to attend the service to provide information on subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1). There was no handbook or alternate electronic system in place to share this information with parents. Services are required to provide information for parents including the details of the class of service, the age profile of children for which the service is registered for, details of the adult child ratios in the service and the type of care programme provided in the service. There was no evidence available that the policies procedures and statements of the service are shared with parents.

It is acknowledged the provider stated that parents were informed informally of the information required to register their child in the service. The information on the running of the service was given informally at drop off and collection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

There is now an information booklet available for parents who are proposing to send their children to the service. This booklet contains information for parents including the ethos, opening times and funding schemes available.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the booklet now shared with parents was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(5) Where pre-school children attending a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre have access to an outdoor space other than such a space specified in paragraph (4), the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The service was operating from one preschool room. There were tables and chairs suitable for tabletop activities. There was sufficient space for children and staff to move around and enjoy various activities and play. Open shelving units allowed children to freely access what they wanted to choose to play with.

There was a supply of Montessori equipment easily accessible to the children. There was a variety of toys provided including books, jigsaws, small cars and plastic bricks. There was a large outdoor area to the rear of the service. This consisted of a mixture of grass and concrete for children to play on. There were swings, ride on toys and a bench for children to sit on.

There was a home corner and miniature construction toys for children to play with.

Non-Compliance Information

There was no rest area available in the classroom for children to rest if they were tired.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The rest area has been reinstated in the preschool room.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Supporting documentation submitted

The inspector received a photograph of the rest area which consists of low sized comfortable seating for the children.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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

Staff sat with the children during meal and snack times making it a sociable time for them. Parents provided all snacks and meals for the children attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

1.
There was one child attending on a full day care basis. They had their main meal at 12:30. They had a meal consisting of cold pasta with cheese. National standards for preschools require services to provide a hot meal to children attending on a full day care basis. This meal should consist of food from three food groups. For example, rice / potato / pasta, with a vegetable /salad, and a protein such as meat, fish, eggs, or beans.
2.
There was a child attending on a part time basis who was given a snack at 12:30 consisting of dry crackers and juice to drink. This snack was not sufficient to meet their nutritional needs as children attending on a part time basis are required to have a snack consisting of food from 2 food groups.
3.
The children were observed to drink a high quantity of juice on the day of the inspection. This practice posed a risk of tooth decay for the children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1.2.

There is now a healthy eating policy in place which has been shared with the parents. The service will continue to encourage parents to provide healthy choices of food for their children. Information leaflets have been displayed in the service and shared with parents via the mobile phone application in place in the service.

3.

The service will continue to encourage milk or water as the main drink served to children in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the healthy eating policy was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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

The registered provider took the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the preschool children attending the service:

GENERAL SAFETY

All cleaning agents were stored in a safe and secure area which was inaccessible to children.

INFECTION CONTROL

The service was clean. There was, liquid soap and foot controlled lidded bins available in the service. Good hand washing practice was observed on the day of inspection. Children were observed washing their hands after using the toilet.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Non-Compliance Information

1.
The front door was open on arrival of the inspector. This posed a risk of unauthorised people entering the service and children leaving the service unsupervised.
2.
Perishable foods provided by parents were not stored in the fridge. This measure is required to prevent cross infection in the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1.
The unlocked door was an error on the day. Staff now ensure the door remains locked and is checked during the time the children are in the service.
2.
The healthy eating policy states staff will store perishable food in a cool designated area on the arrival of the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

1.
No documentation received.
2.
Healthy eating policy received outlining the safe storage of perishable items of food provided by parents.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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)

There was a staff member trained in first aid responder course available to the children attending the service from 10:45 following the arrival of a qualified staff member. There was evidence that there were 2 staff trained in a first aid responder course working in the service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position to the staff on the premises and was available to the children attending the preschool service.

Non-Compliance Information

On arrival to the service at 10:15 there was no staff member trained in a first aid responder course available to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

There are 2 staff members trained in a first aid responder course working in the service. This number is sufficient to cover the rota in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two copies of first aid responder certificates for staff who work in the service have been received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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)

There was a template in place to record fire drills which had taken place in the service.

(1)(b)

There was a record available to demonstrate the number, types and maintenance of the firefighting equipment in the service. This maintenance was carried out in October 25. There was a document to confirm a new smoke alarm system had been installed since the last inspection. The smoke alarm was last serviced in September 2025.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Non Compliance Information

The last fire drill was recorded as taking place in May 2025. Preschool services are required to carry out monthly fire drills to ensure the safety of the children attending the service.

Corrective and Preventive Action

Monthly fire drills are carried out in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

The template in place to record monthly fire drills was received by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance in place to cover the number of children the service was registered to accommodate.