

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016DY011
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Name of Service:	Horizons Montessori School
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Address of Service:	2 Cypress Park, Templeogue, Dublin 6W, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D6W R973
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona O'Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	65	PM	36
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate - Tusla Child and Family Agency Brunel Building, Floor 7 Heuston South Quarter Dublin 8, D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	M Bermingham and S Quigley
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Horizons Montessori School is registered to provide full day care, part time, and sessional care for up to 82 children aged 2 – 6 years. Registered operating hours are 07:45 to 18:30. The service operates from a purposely adapted commercial unit over two floors and consists of 6 rooms named Montessori 1 - 6. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is available to the rear of the building.

Staffing

There were 16 adults employed in the service. Fifteen adults were present on the day of inspection, including 12 adults working directly with children, the person in charge, deputy, and cook. The registered provider was not present on the day of inspection.

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 announced and focused on the areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(3)(4), 11(1)(2)(8)(a), 19(1)(a)(b), 23 and 29(d)(e). On inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under regulation 30 and these findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Montessori 1, 2, 3 and 4 rooms.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, deputy, staff 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, 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,*

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- (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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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) The service had a named person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The person in charge and/or the deputy were rostered to be present on the premises for the duration of the opening hours.
- (c) A clear management structure was in place, evidenced by observing the operation of the service and through discussion with staff.

(2)

Sixteen adults were employed in the service of which 3 commenced their employment since the last inspection dated 12 November 2024. This was determined through a review of previous inspection information and discussion with the person in charge. Relevant vetting documentation was reviewed for these three newly commenced adults and a fourth adult, whose documentation was not previously assessed. Garda vetting renewals were reviewed where required. The following details were found;

- (a) Five written and verified references from past employers where available.
- (b) Three written and verified references from sources other than past employers where available.
- (c) Three new Garda vetting disclosures were available and Garda vetting renewals were available in accordance with the Early Years Inspectorates regulatory notice requiring 3-year Garda vetting renewal for all adults employed.
- (d) International police vetting certificates were available for three adults who lived outside of the state for a period of more than six months as an adult.

(4)

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Qualification records were reviewed for four staff members working directly with children and all four held the required qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(3)

A review of documentation showed that the procedures specified in regulation 9(2)(d) were not completed prior to one adult commencing in the service, as required. Allowing adults work with children before their suitability is established may result in individuals who are not appropriate having access to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that going forward all correct documentation will be filed before an employee begins employment or has contact with children and that a staff file checklist will be completed before employment commences to ensure compliance.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The actions stated by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9.

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.

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

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

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Compliance Information

- (1)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection; there were 12 adults working with 65 children in the morning and 36 children in the afternoon.
- (8)
(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times as evidenced by reviewing the current staff roster.

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*
- (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

19(1)(a)(b)

The following observations demonstrated the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service and how appropriate and suitable care practices were in place:

Regular opportunities were provided for children to eat and healthy eating was promoted. Children ate fruit at 10:15, before going outside, and lunch at 11:05, both of which were provided by parents. The cook confirmed that dinner is provided by an external provider, reheated onsite, and served at 13:30. Children drank water from their individual beakers at mealtimes, and the water remained available to children on a low shelf in the rooms and when outside. Children appeared to enjoy their active play outside, running playfully, and riding bikes and scooters. Adults supported children with toileting and personal care.

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Children appeared familiar within the routine and adults supported children with praise and reminders for upcoming transitions, and helped children tidy up. Children's independence was promoted through helpers and leaders and children assisted with tasks in the rooms. Lunch time was relaxed and unrushed and children smoothly resumed activities and play afterwards. Children appeared engaged and to be enjoying their play and activities as adults supported children by prompting new discussions and guiding the resolution of small differences. Adults' interactions were soft and kind as they engaged with children, for example, in circle time, sharing news, singing songs, and playing ball games. Children played and participated in activities socially with peers to include participating in, for example, pretend games, painting, colouring and playing with blocks, small world toys, and playdough.

Montessori and play-based materials were available to children on low open shelving and children were free to choose and move around within the environment. A rest area consisted of a sleep mat that could be rolled out and cushion and books were available in a basket.

Staff reported that the service communicates with parents about a child's day at drop and collection and provides information about activities and learning observations, digitally via an app. A record of parent teacher meetings was also available and pictures of children and their family were displayed.

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 following measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children and provide a safe environment, as evidenced by observation of practice, a review of the environment and documentation, and through discussion with staff;

General Safety:

- The entrance into the service was appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or children exiting the service unsupervised.
- The outdoor area was enclosed and secure.
- There were restrictors on windows to prevent children exiting or falling.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.

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- The kitchen and storage areas were secured and inaccessible to children.
- Toys and play equipment were in good condition.

Infection Control:

- The premises, environment, equipment and materials appeared clean and were maintained in a hygienic condition. Tables were cleaned before children ate lunch and cleaning records were completed.
- Appropriate hand washing was facilitated through the provision of warm running water, foam soap, and hand dryers.
- The children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including after toileting and being outdoors, and before meals.
- Waste was inaccessible to children and managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.
- Perishable food items from children's lunch boxes were stored in a fridge.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated their familiarity with the procedures and practices in place for the administering and recording of medication.
- Prior parental consent was recorded to administer medication with procedures in place to safely administer, if required and including in the case of an emergency.
- Medication was clearly labelled, within its expiry date, stored in the original container, and was stored out of reach of children.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency escape routes and exits were unobstructed and clearly signposted.
- Staff outlined the procedures to evacuate children in the event of a fire and knew the location of the assembly point, in line with the services procedures that were displayed.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

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- (d) In the children's sanitary area on the ground floor, the laminate countertop between the sinks was damaged with dampness in multiple places, exposing an inner porous material and preventing the surface from being effectively cleaned.
- (e) There were six toilets and five sinks available to children on the day of inspection. This number of sinks and toilets does not meet the regulatory requirement of one toilet and one sink for every eleven children attending. There are 73 children in attendance on the busiest day as demonstrated through a review of records and discussion with staff. This was found non-compliant on two previous inspections dated 12 November 2024 and 13 December 2021. The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider did not adequately address the same non-compliance found on two previous inspections.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d)(e) The registered provider stated that children's sanitary areas are currently being refitted with additional and replacement toilets, sinks and surrounds. There will seven toilets and sinks available to children on completion of the works and going forward we will aim to complete necessary building works in a timely manner.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted by the register provider and reviewed by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider will adequately address the non-compliances identified under Regulation 29 and this regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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.*
- (2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.*

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Non-Compliance Information

(1)

In Montessori 1 and Montessori 4, the floor space available for the work, play, and movement of children attending the service was inadequate, as outlined in Regulation 30(2) below.

(2)

1. In Montessori 1 the available amount of clear floor space measured at 14.81sqm, which meets the regulatory minimum space requirement for six children. There were eight children in attendance on the busiest days as confirmed through a review of records and discussion with staff.
2. In Montessori 4 the available amount of clear floor space measured at 14.54sqm which meets the regulatory minimum space requirement for six children. There were eight children in attendance on the busiest days as confirmed through a review of records and discussion with staff.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(2) Points 1. and 2.

The registered provider stated that four children will attend alternative rooms as there is space capacity in those rooms and that going forward management will ensure that classes are correctly divided according to room space.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The actions stated by the registered provider will adequately address the non-compliance identified under Regulation 30 and this regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.