

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016DY021
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Name of Service:	Horizons Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Lakelands, Terenure, Dublin 6, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D6W DK72
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona O Kelly
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland
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

Horizons Montessori is one of two privately owned early years services operated by the registered provider in South County Dublin. Care and education are provided on a sessional basis to preschool children aged 3 to 6 years, term time from 9:15 to 12:15 Monday to Friday. The service is located in a purpose-built premises on the grounds of Terenure College. The classroom is divided into two separate spaces using a room divider. The registered provider also operates a school aged care service from the premises outside the opening hours of the preschool. An outdoor play area is available to the children on the premises.

Staffing

There are currently seven adults employed to work in the service including the principle, the person in charge and five adults employed to work directly with the children. On the day of the inspection there were two adults working directly with the children, and the manager of another service operated by the registered provider who arrived to facilitate the 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 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.

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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 manager, person in charge, 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,*
- (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,*

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(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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspector arrived unannounced at the service.
- (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

This was confirmed with staff during discussions with the inspector.

(2) Following a discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that four adults commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 20 January 2025. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2), (3), (4) was reviewed in respect of the four adults as detailed below. The requirements of Regulation 9 (2)(c) relating to Garda vetting were reviewed for seven adults employed to work in the service.

- (a) Five written and verified references were available from past employers.
- (b) Three written and verified references were available from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for seven adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(3) Documentation reviewed showed that the procedures specified above under Regulation 9(2) had been carried out before the four adults commenced employment in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the four adults employed to work directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs.
- (3) The minimum adult-to-child ratio requirement was maintained in accordance with the children's ages and the type of service delivered. There were 2 adults working directly with 17 children for the duration of the inspection.

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

The registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being were facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service as follows:

Mealtime was observed to be a positive social experience, with children sitting together and engaging in conversation with their peers and staff members. Staff reported that children's lunches were provided by their parents/guardians and brought into the service daily. Children demonstrated independence by retrieving and managing their own lunch boxes, with staff providing support where required. Children were encouraged to

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develop self-care skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. They managed their own personal care routines, including using the toilet and washing their hands independently. Staff were observed to provide advance notices of changes in activities, allowing children to prepare for the transitions. They were observed to be warm, friendly, and responsive in their interactions with children, actively listening and providing time for children to respond. This practice supports the development of children's confidence and communication skills.

The indoor environment was laid out to allow children to move around the space without obstruction. Child size tables and chairs were available to allow children to sit comfortably during activities and mealtime. Low level shelving units situated around the care room contained a variety of Montessori equipment. During the inspection children were observed playing with a range of resources including, construction materials, small world materials, mark making resources, all of which were stored at a level accessible to the children. Low level hooks were available for children to store their coats and bags. All of the children had the opportunity to engage in outdoor play during the inspection. Materials available in the outdoor area included bikes, picnic benches, cars and sports materials.

Staff interacted with children at their level, maintaining eye contact and using the children's names. Children appeared content and readily engaged in conversations with both staff and their peers. Children played both independently and collaboratively, demonstrating positive peer relationships. Staff reported that the service used an online application to share activities, photographs and reports and that parents/guardians were invited to attend meetings with staff twice yearly. Staff stated that parents also had the opportunity to talk to them informally at drop off and collection.

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 entrance to the service was adequately secured to prevent unauthorised persons from entering and to ensure children could not exit unsupervised. Access was controlled through a keypad entry system for staff and parents/guardians, while visitors were required to be admitted by a staff member.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored safely, ensuring they were inaccessible to children.
- Storage facilities were inaccessible to the children.

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- No heavy furniture was observed at a height that could pose a tipping risk to children.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use in the care room and sanitary area to support the safe disposal of waste.
- Liquid soap, warm water and single use paper towels were available at wash hand basins.
- Children were observed engaging in appropriate and consistent hand-washing routines.
- The care room was visibly clean and well maintained. Cleaning schedules were available outlining cleaning tasks.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated an understanding of the procedures required to ensure the safe administration of prescribed and antifebrile medication when necessary. This included obtaining written parental/guardian consent and ensuring both the staff member who administered the medication and the staff member who witnessed its administration signed the relevant records.
- Administration of medication records were available for use if required.

Fire Safety:

- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.
- Fire exits were observed to be unobstructed, clearly identified and easily opened from the inside during the inspection.