

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019FL004
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Name of Service:	Little Brightstars Montessori Ltd
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Address of Service:	Grange, Main Street, Ballyboughal, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A41 X903
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Name of Registered Provider:	Hannah Ennis
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	12
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle
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

Little Brightstars Montessori Ltd was established in 2019 as a privately owned early years' service and the service was taken over by the current registered provider in 2022. The service is located on the first floor of a play and activity centre in the village of Ballyboughal, North Co Dublin in a large care room which can be divided into 2 rooms if required. Entry to the service is gained through a main entrance porch which leads into a soft play area and coffee dock on the ground floor and by then accessing a staircase which leads to the first floor where the preschool room is located. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children aged from 2 to 6 years from 9 am to 6pm Monday to Friday with the majority of children attending the service from 9.00am to 12:30 pm. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. School aged childcare for children up to 12 years of age is also provided in the service.

Staffing

The service employs 5 staff members, all of whom work directly with the children attending 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

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.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10,11,15,16,19,20,23, 25 and 31; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

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.

Additional Information

This unannounced inspection was conducted following receipt of information to Tusla Early Years inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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

(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.

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named persons to deputise in their absence.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the day of inspection.

(2) The files for 4 staff members were reviewed.

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(a) The following references were available from a past employer.

Two validated written references were available and three written references were available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 4 adults whose files were reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff within the early years' service.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files it was apparent that international police vetting was not required for any staff members in the service.

(4) Two staff members whose files were reviewed and worked directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)&(b)

- Three validated written references were not available.
- Three references were not validated.

(3) Three staff members commenced employment in the service prior to all of the requirements of regulation 9 being in place.

(4) Two staff members whose files were reviewed and worked directly with the pre-school children in the service did not have evidence available that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All staff files have been updated. Each staff member has all documents that they need including qualifications, Garda vetting and references.

Management will ensure each new staff member has all required documentation before their starting date by using the check list from recruitment policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of references and validations received.

Copy of staff qualifications received.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been adequately addressed.

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

The following policies relevant to this inspection were requested and reviewed.

Authorisation to collect children.

Staff training policy.

Recruitment policy.

Staff absence policy.

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- There were 15 children aged 3 years 7 months to 5 years 3 months being cared for by 3 staff members. A staff member was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

Non-Compliance Information

(8)(a) Based on a review of the staff attendance records the registered provider did not ensure that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times. This was apparent on the 26/05/2026 when there was no record available for staff members who were present in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The Staff Absence Policy was reviewed and updated to reflect that unqualified staff members will not be left with the early years children in the morning even if there is qualified staff present.

To prevent this from happening again we will close the creche if qualified staff are absent due to unforeseen circumstances.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of staff absence policy.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 11 - Staffing levels has been adequately addressed.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All of the eleven sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a)(b)(c)(d)(f)(g)(h) in this regulation.

(3) The children's records were available and open for review by the inspector as an authorised person.

Non-Compliance Information

On review of the eleven children's registration records the following sections of the registration forms were not completed;

- Three of the eleven children's records did not include Part (1)(e) authorisation for the collection of the child, if any, this section had been left blank.
- One of the eleven children's records did not include Part (1)(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

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Corrective and Preventive Action

The files were completed and returned to the service.

Each new application that comes in will be fully checked and made sure that each section is filled out correctly.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child has been adequately addressed.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(1)(h) Details of children's attendance including arrival and departure times were recorded in attendance registers in the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

(i) Although there were staff rosters available in the service there was no record of 2 adults who were present and working directly with the children on the 26/05/2026 on the roster or staff sign in sheet.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The names of the two adults present on 26/05/2026 were added to the sign in sheet.

The person in charge will ensure that all staff that are on the roster and are marked in on the sign in sheets each day.

In the event of unforeseen absences, where cover is arranged for qualified staff, the rosters will be updated to reflect these changes by the person in charge straight away.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of sign in records.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been adequately addressed.

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 of the service:

Basic needs:

- There was a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the service. The staff members spoke positively to and about the children during the inspection and were responsive to the children's individual needs, likes and preferences.
- The children brought their own snacks with them from home which they were given plenty of time to enjoy. The staff members chatted to the children while they ate thus creating a relaxed and social atmosphere. The children's water bottles were available to them throughout the session positioned on a table in the care room.
- The children's personal care needs were attended to during the inspection. All of the children in attendance were toilet trained and used the toilet independently with discreet supervision provided as required.
- The staff members approached children's behaviour in a calm and supportive manner, redirecting the children before conflict escalated showing respect for children throughout the inspection.

Supporting relationships:

- The staff members were observed interacting with the children in a warm and caring manner. The staff members chatted with the children using warm vocal tones and welcoming facial expressions. The children sought out staff members for comfort and support as they required it.

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- The children's artwork was on display in the care room, which support children's wellbeing by feeling valued and appreciated.
- The staff members were observed taking the opportunity to interact with parents at collection time and update them on their children's day in the service.

Physical and material environment:

- In the care room resources were easily available and accessible on low level shelving. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- Play material accessible to the children included a play kitchen with supportive materials located alongside it, a range of transport toys, construction resources, arts and crafts materials in addition to tabletop materials.

Non-Compliance Information

Physical and material environment:

1. Two shelving units were observed to be turned away from the children and stored tightly against the wall which prevented the children from accessing the play resources contained within, which included specialised Montessori materials and tabletop resources. This practice restricts children's play through reducing their access to play materials and resources.
2. The children's books were located at the rear of a shelving unit and were difficult for the children to access or retrieve them.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The shelving units were turned around to their usual position with montessori materials and tabletop resources accessible to the children and the shelving units will not be turned into the wall again. All staff have been reminded of this
2. The books were made easily accessible to the children. Staff will make sure to keep the book area clear of toys in future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of shelving unit available to the children.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been adequately addressed.

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, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(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

Compliance Information

(1)(b) A rest areas comprising of 2 couches, bean bags and cushions were available in the care room for the children to take a break from activities throughout the day. The person in charge confirmed that no children that are currently in attendance in the service require to sleep whilst attending.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) There is no outdoor area available in the service for the children to use. At previous inspections of the service in 2022 and 2023 there was no outdoor area for the children to use. At the inspection of the service in January 2024 a temporary outdoor area was provided for the children however at the inspection in January 2025 the outdoor play area was not available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The new permanent outdoor play area has been built and is just at the finishing stage. The temporary area was being used up to this point.

Access to the new permanent play area will be available for everyday use from now on.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of outdoor play area.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play has been adequately addressed.

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:

- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on high shelving and in locked cupboards.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.

Infection Control:

- Perishable items supplied by parents and guardians for the children's morning snack were refrigerated.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On the 26th of May two staff members from the indoor play area on the ground floor of the service worked directly with the children attending the early years' service. Neither of the 2 staff members had Garda vetting disclosures, reference checks or qualifications checks undertaken by the early years' service to assess their suitability to work with children, or a record of training on policies and procedures of the service. This posed a potential safety risk to the children in attendance as only employees of the service who are vetted, trained and qualified can work with children.
2. On the inspector's arrival to the service the door to the care room was unlocked which increased the risk of unauthorised entry to the service and to children leaving the service.

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Infection Control:

- Two couches in the care room were damaged with holes present and foam exposed. This is an infection control risk as the couches could not be cleaned effectively.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- On the 26th of May an unforeseen circumstance arose where the 3 qualified staff were absent. A detailed email has been sent into Tusla regarding this situation. Staff from the playcentre will not be asked to cover again and the creche will be closed. Only employees of the service who are vetted, trained and qualified will be permitted to work with the children. If such a situation were to happen again the parents will be notified straight away and creche will remain closed until all qualified staff are available to return to work.
- All staff members have been told to make sure the door is locked at all times and is not left on the latch. This door will remain locked at all times to secure the room and ensure the safety of the children.

Infection Control:

- The 2 couches have been removed and are no longer in the room, washable beanbags have replaced them in the cosy corner.
- All soft furnishings will be checked regularly for any damage like holes etc when being cleaned on a weekly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Photograph of cosy area showing couches removed and replaced with beanbags.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.

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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) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection in respect of staff members.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

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

Compliance Information

(d)The registered provider ensured that the premises was maintained in an appropriate condition. The sections of the wall that had been identified as requiring painting at the last inspection on the 27/01/2025 had been repainted.

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Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(c) an incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time;

Non-Compliance Information

(c)The registered provider failed to notify the Agency in writing that the service was closed on the 27th of May 2026

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Tulsa will be contacted within the 3 working days if we must close the premises for any reason

The person in charge has been reminded that it is their responsibility to notify the agency within the 3 days for any closure that may occur.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 31 - Notification of incidents has been adequately addressed.