

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023DR004
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	St. Nicholas Montessori School Blackrock
-------------------------	--

Address of Service:	Pastoral Centre, Newtown Park Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	A94 VF74
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Nicholas Breakwell
-------------------------------------	--------------------

Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

Date of Inspection:	5 May 2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	8
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	---

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
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

St. Nicholas Montessori School Blackrock is registered to provide part time and sessional care for up to 22 children aged 3-6 years. Operating hours are 09:00 – 14:00. The service operates from a pre-school room in a pastoral centre. There is direct access to an outdoor play area from the room. The service is one of three operated by the registered provider.

Staffing

The service employs two staff who were working directly with children on the day of inspection. A school principal arrived to the service towards the end of the inspection. 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

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.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 school principal, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN	6 May 2026	A document in relation to vetting for an adult, who was onsite on the day of inspection, was written in Spanish. A certified translation of the document was not available.
Status	Action was taken by the school principal following service of the notice and a response was submitted detailing corrective and preventive actions. A translation of the document was also submitted. The actions and response were accepted by the inspectorate.	

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

1. Notification in writing was not submitted to the inspectorate as required, of a change in relation to the registered provider.
2. Notification in writing was not submitted to the inspectorate as required, of the appointment of a new person in charge in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A submission was made by the service which stated that a change in circumstance form was submitted to the inspectorate on 2 June 2026 for a nominated person in charge.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence was submitted and reviewed by the inspector.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence as outlined in the submission will adequately address the non-compliances identified on inspection under Regulation 8.

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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)

- (a) A person in charge was identified on the day of inspection.
- (b) The person in charge was rostered to be on present on the premises for the duration of the opening hours.
- (c) A clear management structure was in place, as evidenced through discussion with staff.

(2)

Vetting documentation was reviewed for two new staff and Garda vetting renewals were reviewed for existing staff with the following found in relation to vetting considerations:

- (a) Two written and verified references from past employers were available.
- (b) One written and verified reference from a source other than a past employer was available.
- (c) Two Garda vetting disclosures were available. Renewals of Garda vetting disclosures were available in line with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring 3-year Garda vetting renewal for all adults employed.

(4)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Two staff working directly with children held the required qualification or recognised equivalent, as evidenced through a review of records.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The service did not have a named person to deputise as required.

(2)

(a)(b) One required written and verified reference was not available for one adult.

(d) See Statutory Immediate Action Notice 0161.

(3)

See Statutory Immediate Action Notice 0161.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a) The registered provider stated that a roster is in place for staff that are currently substituting for a current vacancy, and it will be made clear each day that whoever is substituting is the deputy person in charge.

Management will ensure that each staff member is clear what their role is within the service and that this is reflected in the roster.

(2)(a)(b) The registered provider stated that a written and verified reference for one adult was obtained and the manager will follow up on references and use the checklist in each staff member's file to ensure all the required references are included and verified. Once a reference is received management will ensure that after it is validated that both the reference and the validation form are stored on the staff's file.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted by the service and reviewed by the inspector.

Summary Comment

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

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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with 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 two adults working with 18 children in the morning and 8 children in the afternoon.

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

The following observations demonstrated how 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:

Children ate at regular intervals to include a snack at 10:40 and second snack at 12:30, both provided by parents. Individual water beakers and a water jug were available and accessible to children. The adults assisted with opening children's lunchboxes and children appeared to enjoy their snack while laughing and chatting with each other. Children were supported to use the toilet and wash their hands.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Adults interacted with children in a kind and respectful manner and managed the children's transitions through the daily routine. Children's independence was supported and help was offered to children when needed and in response to children's requests. Adults supported the children to tidy up their play and work and prepare for snack. Children were allocated jobs as helpers and children put on their coats independently to go outside.

The room was bright and warm and child sized tables and chairs were available. A rest area containing soft mats and cushions was available and used by the children for looking at books. Displays on the wall included children's birthdays and their writing.

Children moved freely around the environment and choose different activities and play to include pretend games with cuddly toys, looking at books, engaging in writing, drawing, colouring and cutting activities, and using Montessori materials. Children played outside in a large, paved area with some artificial surfacing. Rocks and plants provided a natural environment. Children were energetically enjoying themselves as they participated in running games, climbing, riding wheeled toys, and playing pretend games.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Materials were not always easily accessible to children during the inspection. The shelving units had hinges and were folded inwards so that access to the items on the shelving was blocked. One shelf holding materials for children's use remained folded closed for the duration of the inspection and three shelves were folded closed at 11:00. At 12:30 two tables were stacked on top of each other and remained out of use and children had a limited choice of materials and access to tables and chairs for the remainder of the day. Staff reported that the shelves were closed because of the requirement to clear the space by the end of the day.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider stated that materials on the shelves will be available to the children at all times so children can freely choose what they would like to do at any time during the school day. Extra storage for teacher supplies and other items will be in place in the new school year; this will free up additional low shelving for materials for children's use. Staff will review how the environment, which is a shared space, can work most effectively for the children on an ongoing basis and improvements will be made as necessary.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The actions stated by the registered provider will adequately address the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19. The environment will be assessed on the next inspection.

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 through observation of practice, a review of the environment and documentation, and discussion with staff:

General Safety:

- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- Whole grapes that were in children's lunch boxes were chopped.
- Windows were made safe with high openings and visibility strips on low glass panels.
- Toys and play equipment were maintained in good condition.
- The television screen was securely mounted.

Infection Control:

- The premises, environment and materials were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Tables were cleaned and disinfected before children ate snacks.
- Perishable food in children's lunchboxes was refrigerated.
- Effective hand washing was facilitated by the provision of warm running water and dispensed soap.
- Children were observed washing their hands before eating and after coming from outside.
- Waste was inaccessible to children.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff were familiar with the procedures and documentation for the safe administration of medication.
- Prior parental consent was obtained for the administration of emergency medication. Staff were knowledgeable about what actions to take in the event of a child requiring the medication and about the location of the medication.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Medication was clearly labelled and stored in the original container.

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 service's procedures that were displayed.

Non-Compliance Information

The service did not ensure that the following adequate measures were taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children and to provide a safe environment;

General Safety:

- The inspector identified a risk of unauthorised access or a potential for a child to exit the service unsupervised, evidenced as follows:
 - On arrival, the inspector directly accessed the children's room by opening the pre-school room door from the hallway of the pastoral centre. It is acknowledged that the person in charge secured the door after the inspector's arrival.
 - The gate from the play area to the front of the pastoral centre was unsecured. It is acknowledged that the school principal stated that this risk was already identified and communication is ongoing with the pastoral centre to install fencing so that children would not access the openable gate. However, there was insufficient interim risk mitigation in place.
- A flex trailed from the TV unit on the wall to the floor of the children's room, posing a potential strangulation hazard.

Infection Control:

- The foot pedal bin in the children's room was not working properly, and children and adults were observed using their hands to open the lid posing a risk of cross contamination.
- A trolley holding materials for children's use was stored in the sanitary area posing a risk of cross contamination.
- A toilet seat insert was not maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. There was no procedure available or record of cleaning the insert in the cleaning records. This poses a risk of contamination.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored in a child's bag in a box on the floor of the children's room which was within children's reach and poses a risk of poisoning.
- Emergency medication held by the service for a child expired in February 2025.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that:

1. The door from the preschool room to the pastoral centre will be locked at all times while the school is operating. Staff training was completed in relation to children's safety in the environment and that children are supervised at all times and in line of sight while playing in the outside area. There is a plan in place by the Pastoral centre to install an interior fence so that children will not have access to the exterior gate.
2. The flex was secured so that it no longer poses any risk. Staff will carry out daily risk assessments to ensure that all areas of the environment are safe and secure.
3. The broken foot pedal bin was replaced with a new pedal bin, and any broken items will be replaced immediately.
4. The trolley was removed from the sanitary area and is now stored in another location in the classroom. The sanitary area will be checked as part of the daily safety/risk assessment check.
5. The toilet seat insert was added to the cleaning schedule of the cleaning team. Teachers will check that it is cleaned regularly and will liaise with the cleaning team to ensure a high standard of cleaning is maintained.
6. Medication will be stored on a hook on a hook out of reach of children and accessible to adults only. Emergency medication, if needed, will be stored on a hook in a labelled bag out of reach of children.
7. The parents were contacted to inform them that the medication was out of date, and they provided up-to-date medication the following day. A list of all medication held on the school premises will be kept with expiry dates included. On a designated day each month a check will be completed that all medication stored in the school is in date. Parents will be given notice of upcoming expiry dates to allow for medication to be replaced in a timely manner.

Supporting documentation submitted

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

Summary Comment

The actions as stated by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23. The actions submitted in relation to point 1 will be assessed on the next inspection.

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)

A person trained as a first aid responder was available to children at all times, as evidenced through a review of the roster. A current certificate of first aid responder (FAR) training was available for two staff.

(2) Two suitably equipped first aid boxes were available.

(a) The first aid boxes were stored safely in conspicuous positions on a hook on the wall in the room.

(b) The first aid boxes were available to children at all times.

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)

(b) A record was available of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. Records showed that the firefighting equipment was serviced in December 2025 and that smoke alarms were serviced on 5 February 2026.

(4)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

A notice of the evacuation procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location in the pre-school room.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(a) Fire drills were not completed monthly, as evidenced through a review of written records and through discussion with staff and the person in charge. The last fire drill was recorded to have taken place on 23 September 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a) The registered provider stated that the pastoral centre carries out fire drills a number of times a year and the preschool take part in these drills. Going forward we will carry out and record our own fire drills on a monthly basis, in addition to joining the drills organised by the pastoral centre.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation was submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider will adequately address the non-compliances identified under Regulation 26.