

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL041
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	EMSC Montessori Ltd
-------------------------	---------------------

Address of Service:	Long Lane, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
----------------------------	-------------------------------------

Eircode:	F92 N923
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Maureen Walsh
-------------------------------------	---------------

Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
----------------------	---------------------

Date(s) of Inspection:	16/07/2026
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	47	PM	44
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner S Kileen
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

EMSC Montessori Ltd. is a privately owned early years' service situated within the town of Letterkenny in county Donegal. The service provides of a full day care and sessional care for children aged 0 – 6 years. A registered school age service is also provided. The hours of operation run weekdays from 7:30 am – 17:30 hours. The service operates from a purpose built, two story detached building. There are five playrooms at ground floor level and two on the first floor. A sleep room is provided off the wobbler's playroom. Meals for children are prepared onsite. The spacious outdoor area to the rear of the building has been subdivided into different sections for children's outdoor play.

Staffing

The service employs 26 adults including the registered provider and the person in charge who were present on the day of the inspection. There were 18 adults working directly with the preschool children. The other adults included 2 cooks; an office administer and a cleaner. There were also two school aged staff present on the day of inspection. The registered provider and the person in charge provided cover to the care rooms for breaks.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, and 28.

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 registered provider, 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, 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) There was a named person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(b) A review of the staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or deputy person in charge were rostered to be on the premises during the hours of operation.

(c) The person in charge confirmed that there was a clear line of authority within the service.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that 17 new adults had been employed since the previous inspection

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

12/11/2024. A total of 17 files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for 9 adults whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

(a) There were 23 written and validated references on file from past employers.

(b) There were 11 written and validated references on file from reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 26 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for nine adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4) Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent was on file for 13 adults.

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) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults, worked directly with children attending the preschool service.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as follows:

In the morning

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Wobblers: Two adults cared for 7 children which were 1 to 2 years of age.
- Toddler 1: Two adults cared for 9 children which were 1 to 2 years of age.
- Toddler 2: Two adult cared for 8 children which were 1 to 3 years of age.
- Montessori 1: Two adults cared for 11 children which were 3 to 4 years of age.
- Montessori 2: Three adults cared for 12 children which were between 4 to 5 years of age.

In the afternoon

- Wobblers: Two adults cared for 4 children which were 1 to 2 years of age.
- Toddler 1: Two adults cared for 8 children which were 1 to 2 years of age.
- Toddler 2: Two adult cared for 8 children which were 1 to 3 years of age.
- Montessori 1: Two adults cared for 11 children which were 3 to 4 years of age.
- Montessori 2: Two adults cared for 13 children which were between 4 to 5 years of age.

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.*

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

*(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.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

1) (a-i)

Thirteen records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year's inspector.

(4)

The deputy person in charge confirmed that the records are retained for the required period as set out in the regulations.

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(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

(1)(a)(b)

Basic Needs

Mealtimes were observed to be child-led and relaxed, with conversations observed between staff and children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Children were encouraged to feed themselves where appropriate with support given by staff when required. The children in the rooms were observed to use tables and chairs and highchairs which were all positioned so the group could sit together, with close adult supervision and interactions. Due to the high temperatures on the day of inspection, children had access to drinking water throughout the session. Staff ensured that children's clothing was kept to a minimum, and sunhats and sun cream were applied to the children who were playing outside. In the wobblers room, children had their nappies changed in line with the daily routine and more often where care needs required. Attention was given to children's self-care with noses cleaned and spare changes of clothes provided when needed. Outdoor overalls are available for each care room for use in inclement weather conditions. The person in charge confirmed that the sleep needs of children are usually met in line with their individual care needs and safe sleep policy. On the day of inspection, sleep room temperatures were recorded above the safe sleep guidelines of 20°C, prompting immediate action from the registered provider and the person in charge to ensure the safety of the preschool children. The registered provider and person in charge identified the potential safety risk and took proactive steps to mitigate the risk to the preschool children. They used the service's digital application to notify parents of the situation offering parents the flexible option to collect their children. Rest areas in each room included soft seating, mats and cushions providing areas for children to rest and relax during their day. All children were observed to experience a change of environment on the day of inspection and were dressed appropriately for the weather. Children were wearing appropriate clothing to remain cool. Staff in the service acted appropriately to warm weather by introducing games to cool children down.

Supporting relationships

There was a key worker system in place in the service with each staff member assigned a group of children to form close relationships with. Communication with parents was observed to take place at drop off and pick up times and through a digital application. This was further facilitated through learning portfolios which were shared with the parents on a regular basis. On the day of inspection, the service was observed communicating with parents regarding escalating indoor temperatures. Parents were informed that due to unsafe temperatures, children could not be safely put to sleep. Consequently, the option to collect children early was offered to parents. Interactions between the staff and the children were warm, cheerful and positive with staff observed taking time throughout the day to name, identify and describe the children's emotional responses. The staff team in each care room and throughout the service collaborated well in relation to the children's needs and activities. Staff were active in their communication with each other and management on the day of inspection regarding room temperatures and activities to keep the children cool.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Transitions for the children were managed through verbal and visual prompts, for example the daily routine was displayed on the wall in the Montessori rooms, staff reminded the children in advance of transitions such as the end of outdoor time and home time.

Programme of Activities:

Ongoing observations and assessments were documented which helped create a well-rounded picture of each child and their learnings. All children had a learning portfolio which was sent home for parents comments each term. This measure ensured that parents were kept up to date with the children's learning and could support the children to continue these learnings at home. Observations were individual to the child and recorded tasks completed and goals for the future. Children's language development was observed to be supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling. On the day of inspection, the children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage with. Turn taking and sharing was promoted; this was evidenced in all rooms on the day.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 premises including the play area was secured to prevent preschool children from exiting the service.
- All internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- Cleaning products were securely stored to be inaccessible to the preschool children
- The kitchen which contained cooking facilities and hazardous items was not accessible to the children.
- Gates leading to unsecured, hazardous areas were secured.

Infection Control:

- Children demonstrated good hand hygiene practices after using the toilet.
- Staff cleaned tables before and during the meals in the service.
- Thermostatically controlled water, paper towels and soap was available.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff advised the inspector of the correct procedure to be followed in the event of a child requiring medicine.
- Medical care plans were in place and displayed for children who required them.

Safe Sleep:

- No sleep took place in the service due to high temperatures recorded in the service on the day of inspection.
- Risk assessments regarding sleep were carried out to mitigate any heat-related risks to children due to the high temperatures on the day of inspection. The service communicated the requirement for no sleep on the day of inspection and offered parents the opportunity to collect their children if they desired.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation plans were displayed throughout the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) The service demonstrated that all children are checked in on arrival and checked out on departure. A record of these times is maintained in the service.

(3) (a) (b) On the day of the inspection, the registered provider authorised entry of the inspector and recorded this visit in the visitors' book.

(4) The service has a visitors' book which provides a record of all people visiting the service. The registered provider was aware of the requirement to retain the record referred to in paragraph (3) (b) for a period of one year.

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) Two adults were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) for children and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2) (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored in conspicuous positions in the service. There was a sign in each care room which stated the location of the first aid equipment in the building.

(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children were available to the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 100 pre-school children attending the service on a full day care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 01 September 2025 to 31 August 2026.