

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS054
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Name of Service:	Darling Buds Montessori & Daycare
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Address of Service:	Maryborough Village, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 PX53
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Walshe
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	36
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore Co. Offaly
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn and F Carty
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

Darling Buds Montessori & Daycare provides full day care, part time and sessional care for children between the age of 0-6 years. The service operates from 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. Darling Buds Montessori & Daycare is one of four services operated by the registered provider. This early years' service is located in an purpose built two storey premises in a residential area of Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The Orchard room, Senior Preschool room, two sleep rooms, an office and kitchen are located on the ground floor. The Rose room is located on the first floor. Parking and set down facilities are available in the onsite carpark to the front of the premises.

Staffing

The registered employer employs fourteen staff to work in the service. The service has a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge who were not assigned to care rooms but available to provide support if required. 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, safety and premises. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

- Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4),
- Regulation 11– Staffing Levels (1)(2)(8)(a),
- Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school child, (1),

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- Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(a),
- Regulation 22 – Food and drink,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 22 and 23 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN3546	07/07/2026	International Police vetting was not translated into English in respect of one staff member. The original document of International Police vetting for one staff member was not on file.

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Status

The registered provider submitted a written response with corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.

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.*

(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.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the Person in charge it was determined that six new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 14 February 2025. The staff files of the newly employed staff members were reviewed and the following was noted;

(a)

Nine written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

One written validated reference was available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the six new staff members. In regard to all staff members, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available for two new staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

One newly employed childcare staff member working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be the equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

A second written and validated reference was not available in respect of two new staff members employed.

(d)

See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN3546 served.

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(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2)(b)(d) had not been completed prior to two staff members being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Two written validated references were located and forwarded to the inspector. Going forward all staff files are checked monthly to ensure they are always compliant.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of two references received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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. In the morning on arrival at the service, there were 36 children being supervised directly by six adults. In the afternoon, there were 36 children being supervised by six adults. The person in charge and registered provider was also available to assist in the preschool rooms.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

Morning

- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 1-2 years in the Orchard room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to fourteen children aged between 4-5 years in the Senior Preschool room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to thirteen children aged between 3-5 years in the Rose room.

Afternoon

- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 1-2 years in the Orchard room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to fourteen children aged between 4-5 years in the Senior Preschool room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to thirteen children aged between 3-5 years in the Rose room.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g).
- (h)
The attendance records of children were recorded at the time of entering and leaving the service.
- (i)
The staff roster was available and reflected the adults working in the service.
- (j)
A medication administration book was located in the service. A sample of 15 medical administration records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

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- (k)
- A sample of 14 accident and incidents records were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

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)

Basic Needs

The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the day as they chose between activities. Staff members in the Orchard and Rose rooms were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names, appropriate eye contact was made, and soft vocal tones were used during interactions.

Children were observed to sit together at low tables while eating their meals. Staff sat with the children during mealtimes and engaged in conversation.

Staff supported children in the Orchard and Rose rooms to wash their hands before meals and after toileting. Children in the Orchard room had their nappies changed on a routine basis and more frequently if required. Cots were available in the two designated sleep rooms for children requiring a cot to sleep in. Low level beds with appropriate bed linen were available in the sleep room for children aged two years and above.

Supporting relationships

The preschool rooms had family walls with pictures of the children with their family members. This helped the children feel connected to home. Individual record books were maintained for each child which went home in children's bags each day and detailed the children's meals, sleep and toileting. Updates were also provided at drop off and collection times.

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Physical and material environment

Children in the Orchard and Rose rooms accessed toys and play equipment freely from low-level shelving, enabling free choice. There were designated areas of interest including a home corner, construction area and a book corner. Children from the Senior preschool room and Rose room were observed enjoying playing outdoors. An open corrugated roofed area in the garden provided shelter from the sun.

Each preschool room had rest areas with child size vinyl couches and a bookshelf for children to sit and rest from activities during the day. The Orchard room had vinyl floor mats for younger children to crawl and sit on during play.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

All meals and snacks to the children attending the Orchard room were provided by the service and prepared in the kitchen onsite. The parents of the children in the Rose room provided the children's morning snack. The service had a four week menu plan. Dinner served on the day of inspection was sweet and sour chicken with rice. Meals served on the day of inspection were observed to be in keeping with the menu plan for the day. The menu stated 'all meals served with water and drink'. Drinks of milk and water were placed on each table for the children to drink during meals. Fruit, meat or fish were on the menu to be served daily. Individual water bottles were available to the children in the preschool rooms throughout the day.

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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 door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.

Cleaning products were stored safely in the sluice room out of reach of children.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were developmentally appropriate and in good condition.

The kitchen was inaccessible to the children on the day of the inspection.

Handrails on the stairs were positioned at two different heights, with a low-level handrail for smaller children to use when transitioning between the preschool room and outside.

Infection Control:

Warm water and liquid hand soap were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children from dispensers. The children were supported to wash their hands after outdoor play, before meals and after using the bathroom. Staff washed younger children's hands after nappy changes.

Pedal bins were available in each preschool room and sanitary accommodation for the disposal of waste.

The preschool rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. Children from the Orchard room were provided with a cot in a designated sleep room, while older children slept on low level beds. The temperature in the sleep room for children from the Orchard room was recorded as 22°C. A log was maintained of the colour, position and breathing pattern of the sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

Fire exits in the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. A notice showing the fire assembly point at the front of the service was on display.

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Non-Compliance Information

Administration of Medication:

One child in the Rose room was on a medical care plan for an adrenaline auto injector; however, staff were not trained in the administration of the medication and were unclear as to the type of allergy, necessary actions to be taken to administer the emergency medication. The medication was stored in the kitchen, which was located downstairs in the service, the care room where the child was cared for was on the first floor of the service. This would delay access to the medication if it was required. This posed a risk to the child in the event of a medical emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Administration of Medication:

An updated care plan has been put in place for all staff members to read and sign. FAR staff who are trained to administer auto injector medication will train all members of staff. Two medicine boxes are located in each of the child's classrooms. The staff are all familiar with care plans and parents are requested to add all important information. All staff members will sign when they have read a care plan. Location of medication will be noted on the care plan, so all staff are aware where the epi pens are located.

Supporting documentation submitted

Administration of Medication:

Copy of child's care plan template reviewed.
Photographs of two epi pen boxes viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c)
The room temperature recorded in the Rose room exceeded the required temperature range of 18°C – 22°C. The temperature recorded in the room was 23.9°C despite the windows being open.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A fan is available for hot days to assist in keeping the temperature between 18-22°C.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of fan.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 has been adequately addressed.