

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019LS002
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Name of Service:	Darling Buds Montessori and Daycare
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Address of Service:	165 The Hermitage, Rathevan, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 T850
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Walshe
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Service type:	Full Day, sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Fynn
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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).

Description of service

Darling Buds Montessori and Daycare offers full day and sessional care and education to children aged between 0-6 years. Children currently enrolled in the service age from 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 08:00 – 18:00, Monday to Friday. This service is one of four early years services operated by the register provider in Co Laois and Co Kildare. The service operates from a purpose-built single storey premises and consists of a wobbler room, toddler room, ECCE 1 and ECCE 2 rooms, two sleep rooms, an office and a kitchen. The service is located in a residential area in the town of Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Onsite car parking and set down facilities are located to the front of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider employs ten adults to work in the service. The registered provider works between all the services and provides support to the four services. The registered provider and person in charge facilitated the inspection on 24 August. There were ten adults present on the day of inspection; this included the registered provider, the person in charge and eight-childcare staff working directly with the children.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2) (a)(b)(c)(d), (4) – Management and recruitment,
- Regulation 11 (1),(2),(8)(a) – Staffing levels,
- Regulation 15 – Record of preschool child,
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The registered provider and the person in charge were on the premises during the inspection.

(2)

Files for ten staff members and the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(a)

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Fourteen written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

Eight written validated reference were available from a reputable source.

(c)

In regard to the ten staff and the registered provider 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 four staff members who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Ten employed childcare staff members and the registered provider working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. On arrival at the service,

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

there were thirty children being supervised directly by eight adults. In the afternoon, there were twenty-six children being supervised by eight adults. The registered provider and person in charge were also available to assist in rooms when required.

(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 three children aged between 1-2 years in the Wobbler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to eight children aged between 1 year 7 months and 3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 2-3 years and 6 months in the ECEC 1 room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 3-5 years in the ECEC 2 room.

Afternoon

- There were two adults providing direct care to three children aged between 1-2 years in the Wobbler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to six children aged between 1 year 7 months and 3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to seven children aged between 2-3 years and 6 months in the ECEC 1 room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 3-5 years in the ECEC 2 room.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)
A sample of 12 records were reviewed. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g) and (i) of the above regulation for the records reviewed.

Non-Compliance Information

(h)
There was no record of immunisation for any of the 12 records sampled.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(h) Child Record Forms have been updated to include details of child immunisation records. Management notified to contact all parents to provide immunisation records for their child.

Supporting documentation submitted

Updated child record form forwarded reviewed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 15 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)

Basic needs

Parents provide the morning snack for their child. The service provides the hot meal, afternoon snack and tea in the afternoon. On the day of inspection children had beef, vegetables and mash potatoes for lunch.

Staff sat with the children during lunch time and engaged in conversation and assisted smaller children when needed. Children in the Wobbler room sat in highchairs during meals and wore bibs to protect their clothing. Drinking water was provided to children with their meal. Jugs of water were observed in each preschool room. Children in the Toddler room and ECCE rooms were observed sitting together at low tables eating their meals and engaging in conversation. Staff supported children in the Toddler room and ECCE rooms to wash their hands before meals, after toileting and after outdoor play.

Self-toileting was supported for children in the ECCE rooms, and children were supervised as necessary. Children in the Wobbler and Toddler room had their nappies changed as required.

Children from the Wobbler and Toddler room were observed to sleep in cots. Staff were aware of the individual sleep needs of the children and advised that some children take two naps during the day depending on the age and stage of development.

Supporting relationships

Learning Journals were maintained for children with a collection of their artwork and photographs.

Communication between parents and staff is facilitated by an online messaging application. Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

first names, appropriate eye contact was made, and soft vocal tones were used during interactions. Staff in the Wobbler room were observed sitting on the floor with the babies who were moving freely around the preschool room.

Physical and material environment

The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the day as they chose between activities. Toys and play equipment were positioned on accessible open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice and encouraged spontaneous play. The weather was sunny on the day of inspection and children were observed to spend most of the day playing in the outdoor play area. The outdoor play area is divided into two areas to separate the small children from the older groups. Children were observed digging in the sand and stones, filling up buckets and making creations.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

A variety of age and developmentally appropriate equipment was available for the children. The wobbler room had colourful, vinyl play mats in the corner for babies to safely crawl and climb on. A wall mounted mirror positioned at child height had a pull bar to encourage small children to move and stand.

Other areas of interest included a chalk board located at child height, a play kitchen with equipment and low shelves with musical equipment.

Arts and crafts materials were accessible to children in low shelving units in the preschool rooms, with paint, a selection of colouring pencils and stickers.

Open accessible shelves displayed a variety of wooden puzzles and jigsaws, shape sorters and toy vehicles.

An outdoor play area with natural grass was provided at the back of the preschool. A wooden playhouse with a slide was available to the ECCE children. Ride on equipment such as cars and trikes were available to the children in the garden. Painted tyres placed in the ground provided an interest area for digging. Shovels and containers were available to the children. Messy play was facilitated with sand and water troughs in the outdoor play area.

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 secure and managed by the staff within. This prevented children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and unauthorised access to the service. A doorbell alerted staff to any visitors.

Cleaning products were stored safely on high shelves out of reach of children.

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

The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured by a tall wooden fence and two wooden gates on each side of the premises which were both securely locked during the inspection.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible from wall mounted dispensers. Pedal bins were available in the preschool rooms and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation and nappy change room. Openable windows were also in the sanitary accommodation.

Removable washable mattress protectors were on each cot mattress in the sleep room. Fresh sheets were placed on the mattresses before each child slept.

Staff reminded children to wash their hands before snacks, after outdoor play and after using the toilet.

Soothers were stored correctly in individual containers.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. Sleeping children were physically monitored at 10-minute intervals by a staff member and written records were maintained of the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

Fire exits in the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. A fire assembly point was located at the

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

front of the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 46 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2027.