

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC013
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Name of Service:	Aim High Montessori
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Address of Service:	16a Cois Coillte, Kilworth, Kilworth, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P61 DX92
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Name of Registered Provider:	Finola Hogan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	01/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Second Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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Inspection undertaken by:	F Collins
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Aim High Montessori is a privately run sessional service located in the village of Kilworth in North Cork and facilitates the Early Childhood Care and Education programme daily for 38 weeks of the year. The service is operated from a purpose-built building, that is all on the ground floor level. The service comprises of a large playroom, and a suitable onsite outdoor play area. The small activity room is currently not in use as the children play outside under the canopy. There is also access to adult and child sanitary accommodation, a kitchen, storage facilities.

The large outdoor area is covered in grass and has a canopy that partially covers the space making it accessible in all weathers.

The service has a small amount of off-road car parking and parents/guardians can also park in the Cois Coillte estate.

The hours of operation are from 09.00 - 12.00 daily and the service caters for a maximum of 22 pre-school children. The service is registered to provide care for children aged 2-6 years.

Staffing

There are currently three adults working in the service inclusive of the registered provider. All staff are educated in early childhood education and care at level 5 to level 8 on the national qualification's framework.

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.

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, 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) The registered provider was the named person in charge. The registered provider was in the service when the inspector arrived and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The roster indicated that the registered provider was onsite during the operation of the service.

(c) There was a clear management structure identified in the service, with the registered provider, the deputy person in charge and childcare staff.

(2) There were three staff employed in the service. The staff files for all three were assessed.

(a) Six references were required, and all six references were available from past employers. References were validated as required.

(b) Not applicable as all references were available from past employers.

(c) Garda Vetting was available for all three staff; the service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as no staff member had resided outside of Ireland in any one country for longer than six consecutive months.

(4) All three staff were appropriately qualified between Level 5 and Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework. Two of the staff had obtained the Leadership for Inclusion Level 6 special award to support inclusion in the service.

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 two policies were reviewed and were in line with best practice:

The healthy eating policy.

The complaints 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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied

Compliance Information

(1) The person in charge ensured that there were adequate staff working in the service during the inspection to meet the needs of the children in attendance.

(3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained. There were 3 adults working directly with 17 children attending the sessional service on the day of inspection.

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

Basic Needs:

- The service promoted healthy eating and the children ate their snack together. A staff member sat with each group of children, assisting the children as required.
- The children who were in attendance and who needed nappies to be changed had this done on a routine basis. Other children were able to go to the toilet independently.
- Any child who required assistance with hand washing was supported with same and all children were prompted to wash their hands before snack, after messy play, after coming in from outside and after using the toilet.
- Sleep was not accommodated for in the service, and children were not observed to seek out same. Children who opted out of activities were observed to sit with their peers on the couches and read books or talk with friends. Should a child be unwell and need to sleep, the registered provider stated these children would be sent home.
- Children were allowed to choose their activities, inclusive of art activities, tabletop activities and activities that allowed for imaginary play by using the kitchen. The staff moved about to support the children but allowed them to choose and play with whom and with what they wished.
- The children's mobility was not hindered at any time and the children could move about freely.
- A child who required additional assistance was provided with this support as needed.

Supporting Relationships Around Children

- The children were noted to be familiar with the adults who worked in the service daily and the children were comfortable with them and sought out their assistance as required.
- The staff had a plan for managing transitions and preventing issues arising from children moving seats. The staff had promoted the use of pictures of each child so each child could identify their seat and return to it

when getting ready to go outside and when coming in. This was observed to work well and no issues arose during these times.

- The adults were relaxed when speaking with the children and there were no raised voices noted during the inspection.
- The staff team appeared to work well together.
- Staff operated in partnership with parents as demonstrated with the conversation at drop off and collection and further communication about the upcoming school tour was communicated in writing to the parents/guardians.

Physical And Material Environment:

- The indoor environment consisted of one care room. The sensory room was no longer in use as the sheltered outdoor area had become the alternative space for the children in all weathers. The room had child height tables and chairs where the children were observed to eat and do their arts and crafts, and other tabletop activities. There were open shelving units that were accessible to the children and at their height, which allowed the children to be independent in their activities.
- There was a supply of varied equipment such as arts and crafts, Montessori equipment, and shape sorters as an example for fine motor development. Imaginary games were played with kitchens, garages and home equipment.
- At the corner of the room, the children had access to the quieter area, a couch and books should they require a rest or wish to opt out of activities. This space was observed to be used on the day of inspection.
- The service demonstrated a language rich environment with stories being told, and where children needed to respond. Children were spoken to in small groups and individually and the use of Lámh, Irish sign language, was also in use where a child had delayed speech development.
- The materials and equipment were easily accessible to the children and children were observed to access materials such as paper, stencils and crayons independently.

The Outdoor Environment:

The outdoor environment was developed at the side and rear of the premises and was secured by a high gate and a high surrounding wall. The area was set up into multiple areas of interest. There were two water play areas, with suitable equipment, sand trays and rice trays, a mud kitchen, push lawnmowers that generated bubbles and ride

on equipment. There was a seating area, a large boat to climb into and a music wall. The area was used to develop the senses of the children and to encourage risk taking by physically demanding tasks of climbing and digging.

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 service was secured by a high gate to the side and a locked door to the front, both of which were closed and ensured the safety of the children and prevented unauthorised access by unauthorised adults.
- The windows were secured and could not be reached by the children.
- There was no staircase in the service accessible to the children.
- All toys and equipment observed on the day of inspection were in good condition and free from any pinch or crush points.
- There was no heavy furniture observed that was at a height that could tip over on to the children.
- The electric flexes observed were in good condition and out of reach of the children.
- The storage facilities were inaccessible to the children.
- There were no hot drinks consumed during the operation of the service.
- There was no kettle accessible in the service.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands frequently during the day reducing the possibility of cross infection.
- The paper towels used following hand washing were disposed of in lidded bins that were pedal operated.
- There was hot water accessible in all of the sinks that was thermostatically controlled. The hot water in the children's toilets was recorded at 32.4°C. There was liquid hand soap and paper towels available at all sinks.
- The perishable items contained in the snacks provided to the service by parents/guardians were stored in the fridge following arrival and before snack time preventing the perishable items from spoiling.

- The tables where the children were eating were cleaned with appropriate disinfectant prior to the children having their snack.
- School bags were stored off the ground on a trolley preventing contamination.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit door was unobstructed throughout the inspection. Tables and furniture were an adequate distance away from the door so as not to block it.
- The firefighting equipment was safely tethered to the wall.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service,

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a complaints policy that indicated how the service would manage a complaint and the procedures for the staff to follow as required. .
 - (b) The policy outlined how a complaint to the service would be dealt with.
 - (c) The policy indicated how the complainant would be kept informed.
- (2) (a) There were no complaints records to be reviewed as the registered provider stated she had received no complaints to the service.

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