

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC055
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Name of Service:	Beginners Corner Montessori
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Address of Service:	Lower Road, Newmarket, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P51 HY59
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary O'Sullivan O'Keeffe
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	26/04/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	4
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	134 Bank Place, Mallow, Co Cork.
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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

Beginners Corner Montessori is a part-time service located on the outskirts of Newmarket in North Cork. There were 19 children present on the morning of inspection. A part-time and sessional service is provided to children aged between 2 and 5 years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 9am and 2pm. The premises are single storey and are attached to the registered provider's home.

There are 2 care rooms with Montessori room 1 being used for the care and education of the younger children and Montessori room 2 being used for the care and education of the older children. A kitchen, storage/staff room, toilet facilities and dedicated outdoor spaces are also available in the service.

Staffing

There were four adults inclusive of the registered provider present on the day of inspection and all four were 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
- 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 inspections 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*

(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) The registered provider ensured that—

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and the staff were aware who this person was.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises for the duration of the inspection. On the day of inspection, the registered provider was the person in charge.

(2) Recruitment records in relation to each of the four staff employed at the service were reviewed, along with the records of the student, who was undertaking a work placement.

- (a) Four of the 10 required written and validated references on file were from past employers.
- (b) Not applicable as no references were on file from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Records on file demonstrated that each of the four adults that work in the service and have access to children had been Garda vetted.

(d) Police vetting was not required for the two adults whose files were up to date.

(4) Each of the four adults working in the service held appropriate qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 6 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) A record of validation was unavailable for four of the references, which had been obtained from previous employers. No references were on file for the student who was completing transition year placement in the service.

(d) The requirement or otherwise for police vetting could not be assessed in respect of two adults, whose curriculum vitae was incomplete or not available for inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) The references as indicated have been received and are on file.

(d) Police vetting has been obtained for the one staff member who required same.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) (a) references have been received.

(d) Police vetting documentation for one adult has been received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this Regulation have been met and will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The following policies were reviewed and did not contain the required information to guide staff practice or to ensure parents were aware of the practices within the service:

1. The safe sleep policy did not include when and how children who were asleep were monitored.
2. The healthy eating policy did not indicate what was required for snacks and main meals within the service, how meals are provided and when heated the procedure for this.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The safe sleep policy has been updated.
 2. The healthy eating policy has been updated.
- Both policies will be reviewed annually.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. The Safe Sleep policy has been received.
2. The healthy eating policy has been received.

Summary Comment

The policies received fulfil the requirements for the relevant 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.*
- (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) There were four staff working directly with the 19 children attending the service.
- The children were cared for in two separate rooms where two staff were working directly with each group during the sessional hours. The staff numbers reduced to 1 or 2 adults per group for the remaining 2 hours of part-time care. The child in Montessori room 1 was cared for by one adult and in Montessori room 2 the three remaining children were cared for by one or two adults when breaks were had by the staff.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the adult child ratio for the sessional and part-time service was adhered to. There were four adults working directly with the 19 pre-school children attending the sessional service and there were three adults caring for the four children who remained in the service for the part-time hours.
- As part of the services procedures to include parents, a parent of one of the children enrolled in the service was observing and interacting with the children in Montessori room 2. This parent was not part of the adult child ratios and was supervised at all times.

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)

There were 10 children attending Montessori room 2 and nine children attending Montessori room 1 on the day of inspection. An enrolment form and child record were available for each of the children in attendance.

Of these files 11 were assessed for completeness,

(a) (c) (d), (f,) (g), (h) & (i) were recorded on all children's records assessed.

Non-Compliance Information

(b) The record on when the child first attended the service was not completed or not accurate indicating months only and not the date the child commenced in the service.

(e) On two of the 11 files assessed the records were not complete to indicate who was authorised to collect the child from the service. Not having the names and identification for those who may collect a child may lead to a child being collected by and unauthorised adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(b) The enrolment forms have been updated to ensure the relevant information is available on file and will be reviewed by the registered provider.

(e) The registered provider has committed to ensuring that a person authorised to collect each child has been identified for them. Should the parents/guardians not complete this section the registered provider will complete the information and ensure the staff will have this information.

Supporting documentation submitted

The corrective and preventive action form has been received and accepted as evidence that the enrolment forms will be completed.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this Regulation have been met and will be assessed on the next 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 children in each of the care rooms ate together for their snack in the morning and all the children remaining on for the part-time service came together as a group and ate their main meal together.
- The children used the toilet when needed and the children who needed assistance were helped and reminded to wash their hands.
- Children dressed in painting tee-shirts when they were painting and when going outside for water and messy play the children wore waterproof clothing and wellingtons.
- The children could rest when required. In Montessori room 1 there was a separate room adjacent to the care room where the lighting was subdued and where there was a large floor bean bag where the children were observed to rest and relax. The children in Montessori room 2 could opt out of activities and rest in a dedicated space at the corner of the room.
- The children could move about freely and there was no restriction on movement observed.
- The child who required an individual care plan had same available and this was completed by the staff on an ongoing basis.
- The temperatures in the care rooms were recorded at 18.8 and 18.2°C in Montessori room 1 and 2 respectively.
- Childrens handwashing and personal hygiene was assisted by the staff.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

- Mealtime was sociable with the staff in Montessori room 2 sitting with and conversing with the children creating a sociable environment.
- The staff caring for the children created a supportive environment, assisting each child as required with snacks, painting or other activities such as matching shapes in Montessori room 1.
- Communication with parents and guardians was at drop off and collection.

- Mealtime in Montessori room 1 was a sociable occasion with tablecloths used, the table set up and each child creating a space to set out food and eat.
- When a child required sleep after the sessional service there was a bed with clean linen was set up in the quiet room adjacent to Montessori room 1.

Physical and Material Environment:

- Both playrooms had appropriate height tables and chairs.
- There was open shelving that was accessible to the children, this allowed the children access the toys they wished to play with and make their own decisions on their activities.
- Sensory play was developed through playing with moulding clay, play with coloured rice and sand and painting.
- Gross motor development was evidenced outside with children on balance bicycles, ride on toys and access to grass and hard surfaces where the children ran and played freely.
- Fine motor development was promoted through the use of shape sorters, bricks and blocks and with colouring and painting.
- Imaginary play was developed through room layout in home, garage and shop areas and through the use of dress up when the children were observed to dress as superheroes.

Programme of Activities

- There was a schedule of activities daily. There was a plan in place and the children were aware of what activities were happening and the children were given adequate notice of moving activities with 'clean up' songs sang. The children were very aware of the plan and of moving activity and appeared happy with this.
- All children were noted to have the opportunity to learn through play for example: the children's physical and gross motor development was enhanced through outdoor play.
- Speech and language development was through conversation, rhymes, singing songs and storytelling.
- The children's cognitive development was enhanced through block building and playing in areas such as with the play animals, and imaginary play through dress up.

Outdoor Area:

The outdoor area was laid out into many areas of interest and children from both rooms could meet and play with each other in the outdoor space. There were areas for arts and crafts, ride on toys, a swing and sand area, a grass area with flowers planted. There was a small fairy garden to promote the imagination and a bark mulch area where there were tunnels and slides.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

1. Chairs for the adults were not available in the care rooms so the adults could sit comfortably with the children. This was evidenced in Montessori room 1 where the staff did not have a chair to sit on while the children were eating to engage and interact with them.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Chairs from the staff room will be used during the children break times to ensure the staff can sit with the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. The commitment of the registered provider to ensure staff sit with the children during snack time has been accepted from the corrective and preventive action form.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met.

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

The children's snacks and lunches were provided by parents/guardians.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The food available to the children for lunch was not adequate. One child had a banana, a further child had crackers and a further child had what was left from the morning snack. Children must be provided with a full (not necessarily hot) meal when remaining in the service for additional time. Not ensuring each child had adequate food and nutrition may impede a child concentrating or being able to participate fully in daily activities.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider has updated the services healthy eating policy and this has been circulated to parents. The policy indicated the amount and types of food that must be provided for both snack and lunch time.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. The healthy eating policy has been received and the circular to parents summarising the healthy eating policy.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met and will be assessed in practice 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

General Safety:

- The entrance to the service was secured. The children attending Montessori room 1 entered via the main door which was secured with a thumb turn lock. The children attending Montessori room 2 entered the service via the side gate which was secured when each child had arrived. These measures ensured that no child could gain unauthorised access to the outside carpark and no unauthorised adult could gain access to the service.
- The doors to the storage areas were secured.
- The kitchen was secured with a stair gate ensuring the children in Montessori room 1 could not gain access to the kitchen.
- The hot water in Montessori rooms 1 & 2 and in the children's toilets were recorded at 33.2, 39.2 and 36°C respectively.
- The fire exit was unobstructed and easily opened on the day of inspection.
- The window openings were out of the reach of the children. The window opening mechanism was a tilt and turn mechanism which allowed fresh air into the rooms but would not allow a child climb through.
- There were no hot drinks consumed in the service during its operation.
- All toys were in good condition with no pinch or crush points noted.
- Cleaning and disinfection products were stored out of reach or access to the children.
- No loose or exposed electric cables were evident in the care room.

Infection Control:

The service followed best practice guidelines in the management of the spread of infection:

- A cleaning schedule was observed and signed by the staff.
- The tables were cleaned before and after snack time with a cleaning product suitable for use with children.
- There was hot water in both care rooms and in the children's and adult toilets. Liquid soap and paper towels were available at all sinks to ensure the children and staff could wash their hands as required.
- Pedal operated lidded bins were available for the disposal of waste such as tissues and hand towels.
- The children's snacks in both rooms were stored in a fridge to prevent contamination and potential illness from perishable items contained in the snacks.

- The school bags in each of the care rooms were stored off the ground on dedicated hooks for each child.

Administration of Medication:

- It is not routine in the service for medication to be administered unless they are required for children during the operation of the service.

Fire Safety:

- The fire extinguishers were not accessible to the children.
- The fire exit door was not obstructed.

Outing:

- No outings are undertaken by the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- The paint on the white shop in Montessori room 2 was chipped and exposed unsealed wood was evident. This exposed wood is not easily cleaned and can be a source of contamination and cross infection.

Safe Sleep:

- No records of a sleep check being completed was available for a child aged between the age of 2 and 3 years who slept in the service after the sessional service was finished. The staff did explain how the child was monitored but no records were available. The safe sleep policy did not indicate children sleeping should be checked.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- The white shop has been repainted and a risk assessment has been put in place to assess the paint work within the service.

Safe Sleep:

- The registered provider has developed written records for the staff to record all sleep checks to be completed, these include checking for colour and breathing.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

- Photographic evidence of the painted shop has been received.

Safe Sleep:

- A copy of the template to be completed when checking sleeping children has been received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met and will be assessed on the next inspection.

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

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

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that the children in both care rooms were signed in on their arrival and were also observed to be signed out on departure.

(3) (a) The registered provider ensured that no person other than the staff and students who work in the service could gain access to the service.

(b) There was a record maintained of all visitors to the service and the early years inspector was requested by the registered provider to sign into the service.

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) Records available indicated that all four staff had up to date training in first aid responder and this ensured that the children attending the service had a person trained in first aid immediately available to them at all times.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that there was suitably equipped first aid supplies available to the children at all times in both care rooms.
 - (a) Supplies were stored in the press under the sink in both rooms and these supplies were available to the staff if required for the children.

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) The service records for the firefighting equipment indicated the equipment was serviced in Sept 2022. The service record for the smoke detection equipment indicated the smoke detectors were last serviced on 21.03.2023.
- (4) The notice for the procedure to follow in the event of an emergency was displayed in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The last fire drill completed in the service was on 20.01.2023, no fire drill was completed in February or March 2023. Not completing a fire drill monthly is not best practice to ensure children and staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) (a) Fire drills have recommenced and a record of same is being maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) (a) A copy of the records of the fire drills completed has been received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met and will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The services insurance record stated the service was insured for 30 children to attend at any one time and to operate as a Montessori service. No indication was available for the hours of duration of the service. Clarification was received from the insurance company stating the service was insured to operate for five hours daily.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;

Non-Compliance Information

(d) Following review of a record of an accident which had occurred in the service it was ascertained that the child in question had required treatment in a hospital and by a registered medical practitioner. This accident was not notified to Tusla. Not notifying such incidents may impede the inspection process to ensure the safety of the children in attendance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) In the event of a child sustaining a serious injury Tusla will be notified. All staff have been made aware of the procedure to notify Tusla.

Supporting documentation submitted

(d) The notification of include has been received.

Summary Comment

Following receipt of the corrective and preventive action submission and the notification of incident the requirements for this regulation have been met.