

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:	06/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, 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	N/A
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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 6 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.

The service consists of two care rooms and an extensive outdoor play area. Room 1 is used for the care and education of the younger children and the Main room is used for the care and education of the older children. there are two entrances/exits for use by the two groups. A kitchen, storage/staff room, adult and children's toilet facilities 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 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, 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,*

(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 a deputy, the staff were aware who these staff were.

(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) There were four adults working in the service. Of the four staff that work in the service, all four staff files were assessed.

Of the four files assessed eight references were required:

(a) Of the eight references required six were available from past employers, all of which were validated as required.

(b) Not applicable as no reference was available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) In the four staff files assessed all four had the required Garda Vetting disclosure available and was in keeping with the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew staff Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for the one staff member that required same.

(4) All four adults working in the service held an appropriate qualification at level five to level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) / (b) Two references were not available for staff working in the service. Not appropriately vetting staff with appropriate references may allow adults that are not suitable have access to the children in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) Two references have been obtained from past employers and both references have been validated. The registered provider has developed a staff file checklist to ensure all relevant documentation is available on all staff files.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) (a) A copy of two employer references have been received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met.

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 adults working directly with the 19 children attending the service on the morning of inspection. The registered provider ensured that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained. The staffing on the day of inspection was in keeping with Schedule 6 of the Regulation.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adult to children was met in the service where four adults with qualifications were working directly with 19 children.

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)- (i) There were 19 children attending on the day of inspection of these 12 children's enrolment forms were assessed, the requirements for the details outlined above were available for each child.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (h) Details of the attendance of each child was maintained on a daily basis with the sign in and out times recorded in both care rooms.
- (i) The staff roster details are reported to be the same daily with the staff working the same hours daily and weekly.

Non-Compliance Information

- (k) The accident and incident records were reviewed and of the four records reviewed there was information not recorded on all four records:
1. The first record did not have the second staff name or signature and the details of the treatment given recorded.
 2. The second record did not have a date of the incident, full name and date of birth of the child , no witness signature and no treatment described.
 3. The third record did not have the full name and date of birth of the child recorded.

4. The fourth record did not have a full name and date of birth of the child or a parent signature recorded. Not ensuring accident and incident records are completed may hinder the continuity of care delivered to a child following an accident or incident.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(k) The registered provider has developed a new procedure on completing accident and incident forms and this has been discussed at a staff meeting.

Supporting documentation submitted

(k) A copy of the new procedure to follow in completing accident and incident forms has been received.

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. Lunch was not observed on the day of inspection as no child remained in the service for part-time care.
- The water bottles for each child were easily accessible throughout the day and children were observed to access their drinks as required.
- The children used the toilet when needed and the children who needed assistance were helped and reminded to wash their hands.
- Children dressed in full cover waterproof clothing when going outside and wore wellington boots which were stored outside for daily use.

- The children attending both rooms had child height couches and rest areas accessible to them, this would allow them to rest and opt out of activities if they wished to do so. Room 1 had a quiet room where children were observed to rest and relax during the morning.
- The child who required an individual access and inclusion plan had same available and this was completed by the staff and the early years specialist and with engagement by parents as required. The staff member supporting this child could describe the strategies used to support the child when needed.
- The temperatures in the care rooms were recorded, Room 1 was recorded at 19.9°C at 10.05am and in the Main room at 11.10 the temperature was recorded at 20.7°C, allowing for a comfortable play environment.
- Childrens handwashing and personal hygiene was assisted by the staff.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

- The staff caring for the children created a supportive environment, assisting each child as required with snacks, painting or other activities such as playing with blocks, bricks, and moulding clay.
- Children were observed to play together in small or large groups and for one or two to play alone and opt out of group activities.
- The staff in the Main room were observed to allow the children get dressed for outside and provided assistance when needed but allowed each child develop independence in getting dressed.
- Children were encouraged in their activities and the children in the Main room were given jobs when handing out lunches and drinks which supported them to be independent thinkers.
- Communication with parents and guardians was at drop off and collection.
- Transitions were managed by giving adequate notice of changes in the day. Notice was given and clean up songs were sung. Transitioning to home was managed with the larger group and each child was individually handed over to the person collecting them and an update of the day was given as observed in the Main room.

Physical And Material Environment:

- Both playrooms had appropriate height tables and chairs.
- Sensory experiences were developed through playing with moulding clay, play with leaves, twigs and chestnuts and other materials found outside.
- Fine motor development was encouraged through the use of activity boards, shape sorters and when doing arts and crafts. All activities were stored on open shelving which was accessible to the children.

- Gross motor development was evidenced through outdoor play where arts and crafts, cycling, scooting and running were all observed along with playing on the balance beams, climbing over the equipment and through the different spaces available to the children.
- Imaginary play was developed through room layout in home, dress up, work bench and shop areas.
- Sensory play was supported with arts and crafts, moulding clay and with found materials inside and with sand play and painting easels outside.

Programme Of Activities

- The plan for each day was similar with accessing the outdoor space a significant part of each day. At this time the two groups of children could play together.
- All children were noted to have the opportunity to learn through play for example: the children's fine motor skills developed through arts and crafts and through the use of blocks, threading spools and colouring. Their speech and language was supported through the reading of books in the larger group as observed in both care rooms and through conversations observed in both rooms.
- In the outdoor area the children could learn about bugs and small creatures with laminated pictures of bugs available to the children who were inquisitive.
- Children were afforded the opportunity to choose their own activities and both indoors and outside the children were allowed to move about freely.

Outdoor Area:

The outdoor area was adjacent to the service and was accessible from both care rooms.

- The area had three different areas, one covered with bark chip, a hard surface area and a large grass area. The area outside the main care room was covered that allowed the children use the space when it was raining and were observed to paint and play kitchen games on the day of inspection. This covered area also had tables and chairs and activities for tabletop play so all children could enjoy the outdoor space.
- The children had access to slides, balance equipment, a sit in bus/car to areas of interest to include a fairy corner, a building area and construction and to ride on toys that all were in good condition.

Non-Compliance Information

1. There were no adult chairs available to the staff in the care rooms to sit with the children, the staff were observed to be kneeling beside the children. The registered provider stated chairs were available in the staff room but had not been brought into the rooms.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider has stated chairs are available to the staff should they require same from the staff room.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. The actions of the registered provider as indicated on the corrective and preventive action form are accepted as proof.

Summary Comment

The requirements 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 food served for snack on the day of inspection was provided by parents/guardians and each child had sufficient food and with good variety which included sandwiches, fruit, yogurts, cracker and cheese.

No child remained in the service on the day of inspection for part-time care therefore no mid-day meals were observed.

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 entrances to the service were secured. The side gate was opened for the children arrival and for their collection. The front door was locked with a thumb turn lock and was opened only by staff. The gate to the carpark was secured when the children were outside. These measures ensured that no child could gain unauthorised access to the outside carpark.
- The kitchen area was secured by using a stair gate and no child could access this area.
- The temperature of the hot water in both care rooms was recorded at 39.2 in the main care room, at 34.5°C in Room 1 and at 37.2 and 35.2°C in the children’s hand wash basins in the toilet area. This allowed for comfortable hand washing and was at a temperature that would not cause a scald injury.
- The fire exits were unobstructed and easily opened on the day of inspection.
- The window openings were out of the reach of the children and where a child could access a window this window was a tilt and turn mechanism that could not be opened by the children in Room 1.
- There were no hot drinks consumed in the service during its operation.
- All toys inspected were in good condition with no pinch or crush points noted.
- Cleaning and disinfection products were stored out of reach of the children.
- No loose or exposed electric cables were evident in the care rooms.

Infection Control:

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

- The cleaning of the service was evident with staff cleaning tables before and after snack time and after messy play.
- There was hot water available 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, and paper waste was disposed of in pedal operated lidded bins.
- Snacks were stored in the fridge to prevent contamination and potential illness from perishable items contained in the snacks.

- Children were observed to wash their hands after messy and outdoor play, after toileting and before eating.
- The bags and coats were stored off the ground which prevents contamination and cross infection.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

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

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing unit and the nappy changing mat were both torn with the foam underneath exposed and therefore not easily cleaned, this poses a risk of cross infection when the surfaces were not easily cleaned between uses.
2. The play kitchen being used in Room 1 had paint chipped and exposed porous wood underneath which is not easily cleaned and poses a risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing unit has been re-upholstered with appropriate waterproof covering.
2. The play kitchen has been re-covered and the exposed wood painted.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. A photograph of the nappy changing unit has been received.
2. A photograph of the play kitchen has been received; the kitchen has been painted.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation have been met.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*
- (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)
- (a) The last fire drill was completed on 18.10.2024, evidence was available to indicate that monthly fire drills had been completed.
 - (b) The service records for the firefighting equipment indicated the equipment was serviced on 02.09.2024. The service record for the smoke detection equipment (Alarm) indicated the smoke detectors were last serviced on 18.03.2024.
- (2) (c) The records as above were open for inspection by the inspector.
- (4) The notice for the procedure to follow in the event of an emergency was displayed at the main door.