

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC071
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Name of Service:	Ballincollig Montessori School
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Address of Service:	85 Beech Rd., Muskerry Estate, Ballincollig, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P31 CK79
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Connolly, Marguerite Morley
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Service type:	Part-time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	3
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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

Ballincollig Montessori School is privately operated and is registered to cater for children aged 2 to 6 years. Options of sessional and part time care are provided, with children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme from 9.00am to 12.00pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year. Part time hours are between 8.30am and 12.30pm. An afternoon sessional service is not currently provided. Situated in a residential area of Ballincollig in Co Cork, the service operates from a purposely adapted premises. There are two care rooms, along with adjoining sanitary facilities, and an office/storeroom. At the rear of the building, an outdoor play environment is available for the children's use.

Staffing

There are eight adults attached to the early years service. One of the two registered providers is based at the setting. Two adults are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support scheme.

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 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, 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)
- (a) There was a named person in charge of overseeing the operation of the service. The requirement for a deputy person in charge was also met, with written information available to this effect.
- (b) The person in charge was working at the setting when the unannounced inspection commenced and facilitated the duration of the inspection. Examination of the staff roster confirmed the practice of ensuring that a person in charge was available on site during the hours of operation.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge, it was determined that four adults had commenced working at the setting since the previous inspection on 19 April 2023. These four files were reviewed and the following was noted:
- (a) Eight written and validated references were required in total and all eight had been obtained from past employers.
- (b) None of the references on file were from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the four staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Following review of the adults' curricula vitae, police vetting was not deemed to be required.
- (4) Evidence to demonstrate the successful completion of a relevant award in early childhood care and education, was available in respect of each of the four adults.

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) It was observed that there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance.

(2) The adult child ratios during the day of inspection met the requirements of the regulation, as follows:

- During the morning, there were 29 children, aged 2½ to 5 years, in attendance between the 2 care rooms. Five adults were working directly with these children.
- In the afternoon, a total of 4 adults were responsible for the care of 3 children, aged 3 to 5 years.

(8)

(a) At least two adults were present at all times throughout the inspection period. This practice was also evidenced through review of the staff roster.

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) The person in charge advised that there were 32 children enrolled at the setting. A sample of 10 child records were reviewed and met the requirements from (a) to (i).

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic needs:

- The mid-morning snack was observed to be relaxed and unhurried, with conversation and social interaction encouraged. Staff members sat with the children, ensured appropriate supervision and readily assisted any child who required help to open lunch boxes or food packaging.
- Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day, should they become thirsty at any stage; in each of the rooms, the children's reusable water bottles were accessible to them at their eye level.
- The children were noted to independently access the adjoining sanitary facilities, with adults nearby to provide appropriate reminders.
- The children's need for rest and relaxation was met through the provision of rest areas within the care rooms, which each consisted of soft seating, with an adjacent selection of books. Children who required sleep could be accommodated on stackable beds.
- The available space within the care rooms sufficiently met the children's needs to move freely as they played, explored and participated in the daily routine. Outdoor play was also facilitated during the morning.

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

- A healthy eating policy was implemented at the setting.
- The children’s parents or caregivers supplied the food for their mealtimes. On the day of inspection, the children’s morning snacks consisted of sandwiches, crackers, rice cakes, cheese, yogurts and a variety of fruit, with water to drink.
- The person in charge advised that children who attended for part time hours were offered a second snack after the ECCE service.
- The service operated a nut free policy in response to a food allergy. All of the parents had been alerted to this requirement and the inspector was advised that reminders were also sent to parents in advance of upcoming food based events, such as pancake Tuesday.
- During discussion, the person in charge stated that if a child expressed that they were hungry outside of routine mealtimes, they could choose something to eat from their lunchbox. This was in keeping with the service’s healthy eating policy.

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:

- Unauthorised entry to the childcare facility and the unsupervised exit of a child were prevented. A keypad entry mechanism was in place at the main entrance door and exit from the interior was via a high-level door release button.
- Fencing and gates provided a secure enclosure of the outdoor play area.
- The staff toilet was secured from the exterior, to prevent access by children.
- Safe storage was in place for cleaning agents.

- Cables and flexes were maintained out of reach of children.
- Blind cords were examined and found to have been adequately secured with tension devices.

Infection control:

- Dispensers of liquid soap and paper towels were easily accessible at the wash hand basins, which also had a supply of warm water. The children were observed to wash their hands after using the sanitary facilities and before mealtimes.
- Lidded, pedal operated bins were in use.
- The children's perishable snacks were stored in a refrigerator until the mid-morning snack was accommodated. This ensured that such foods were maintained within the safe range of 0°C to 5°C, as required.
- Cubby shelving was provided for the storage of children's personal belongings.
- Cleaning of surfaces and floors was observed when the sessional service had concluded.

Administration of medication:

- Temperature reducing medication was stored safely out of the children's reach and was in-date.

Fire safety:

- Fire exit signage within the service was clearly visible.
- The service's fire extinguishers were wall mounted.
- Fire exits were unobstructed during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Administration of medication:

The expiry date had passed on two of the medications that were held in respect of one of the children. This posed a risk that expired medication, which may be unsafe to use, could be administered to a child. It was acknowledged that once this was brought to the attention of the person in charge, the child's parent was immediately alerted and provided replacement, in-date medication to the service, shortly afterwards.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The written reply outlined that the parent was contacted immediately and that new medication was on site before the inspection concluded. As a preventive measure, the date of expiry on medication will be noted by the manager and parents and replacements will be in place before medication expires. These dates will be recorded in an online calendar. The policy on administration of medication has also been reviewed.

Supporting documentation submitted

The medication was replaced at the time of inspection.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted have adequately addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) Evidence was available to demonstrate that two of the adults held current First Aid Response (FAR) certification and that at least one of these adults was rostered to work at the service during the hours of operation.