

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015CC107 |
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| Name of Service: | Cobh Montessori and Full Day Care |
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| Address of Service: | Rushbrooke Links, Cobh, Co Cork |
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| Eircode: | P24 E443 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Aine Murphy |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 09/04/2025 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 62 | PM | No. |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|

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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | 13 Market Square Mallow Co Cork P51DD5Y |
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| Inspection undertaken by: | J Dennehy & Í Cronin |
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| Title: | Inspection Registration Manager and National Inspection Manager |
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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).

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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

Cobh Montessori and Full Day Care is a privately owned early years service in operation since 2006. This service is registered to provide care and education to children from 0 to 6 years but is currently catering for children aged 1 to 6 years. The service offers a choice of sessional, part time or full day care including the provision of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is also registered to offer a school age care. The current opening hours are from 07.45am to 6.00pm each day Monday to Friday.

Cobh Montessori and Full Day Care Service is situated within a residential area on the outskirts of Cobh, Co Cork. It is a two storey, purpose built childcare centre and six playrooms were in operation at time of inspection. The Infant Montessori 1 and 2 and Junior Montessori 1 are located on the ground floor. The Junior Montessori 2 and Senior Montessori 1 and 2 are located on the first floor. The service has an adequate number of toilet and nappy changing facilities, two designated sleep rooms, staff room, office, storage areas and a staff kitchen. The outdoor play area is located to the rear and side of the facility. The premise has their own private parking area to the front of the building.

Staffing

There are 14 adults employed in the service. This includes the registered provider who is not working directly with the children. There are 13 adults working directly with 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the children, person in charge, and staff 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) There was a designated person in charge in the service and there was a named person who was able to deputise if needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and the named person were on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in the service and all staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) The staff files for 14 adults who were attached to the service were the subject of inspection.
- (a) Of the 28 required references, 23 were from a previous employer with the required validations on file.
 - (b) Of the 28 required references, 5 were from another reputable sources with required validations on file.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained and were on file. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) There was police vetting on file for two of the staff members that had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months.
- (4) Records demonstrated that 13 adults had achieved at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The registered provider did not require to have a qualification as they did not work directly with the children.

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.*
- (4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*
- (a) a sessional pre-school service, and*
 - (b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*
- (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) At the time of inspection, there was always an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were reviewed in the morning and were maintained appropriately throughout the inspection. The ratios were as follows:
- There were two staff in the Infant Montessori 1 with children aged between 1 year and 2 years.
 - There was one staff in the Infant Montessori 2 with children aged between 1.5 years and 2 years.
 - There was one staff in the Junior Preschool 1 (downstairs) with children aged 2 to 3 years.
 - There were two staff in the Junior Preschool 2 (upstairs) with children aged 2 to 3 years.
 - There were two staff in the Senior Preschool 1 with children aged 3 to 5 years.
 - There were two staff in the Senior Preschool 2 with children aged 3 to 5 years.
- (4)
- (b) The service maintained the required adult to child ratios of 1:8 for children aged 3 to 6 years and 1:6 for children aged 2 to 3 years where applicable when the sessional service finished.

- (8)
- (a) The service had at least two staff present at all times while the service was in the operation as was determined by reviewing the previous rosters available within the service.

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

A sample of 12 registration forms of the children enrolled at the service were reviewed, as part of the inspection process.

- (1) The required information, as detailed under parts (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h) and (i) of this regulation, were maintained in writing in respect of each child attending the service.

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 care rooms within the service were spacious and gave children room to move around freely and explore their environment. All children were given the opportunity to explore the outdoor environment on the day of inspection. As the weather conditions were good children were given ample time in the outdoor environment.
- The service promoted healthy eating, regular food and snacks were provided throughout the day. The food provided was varied and nutritious. All food was supplied by the parents/guardians.
- Drinking water was always available during the day and children could independently access their own drinking bottles.
- Nappy changing was carried out at regular intervals and as required. Interactions during this process were observed to be warm and caring towards the children.
- Children's toilets were accessible from each care room, this allowed the children to use the toilet as they needed and seek assistance if required.
- The children's need for sleep and rest was facilitated at set periods within the care routine. Children were accommodated in cots and there were beds available for older children if required. Rooms downstairs had soft matting for children to relax outside of sleep times. Rooms upstairs had developed relaxation areas by providing cushioned chairs within the book areas of the rooms.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff members demonstrated fondness and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. The staff were responsive to the needs of the children and spoke to them in soft tones and at their level. This respectful approach towards children was observed with all staff members.
- The staff were observed to engage with children on an individual basis through out the day and ensure that their attention was shared among the children.

- The service communicated with parents on an electronic application specifically designed for childcare. They frequently shared pictures and provided updates in relation to each child. Friendly exchanges were observation at the morning drop off.

Physical and material environment:

- The physical environment was well planned out to utilise space and there was a wide range of varied materials available to the children.
- Materials were available on low level shelves and could be accessed independently by the children. Appropriate child sized tables and chairs were provided.
- A range of books were provided in all care rooms which supported children's language development.
- There were a number of displays within each of the care room which reflected the individuality of each child in attendance such as the world maps displayed in Senior Montessori Room 1 and 2 that located each child's place on a world map.
- The service had a variety of plants in each room, helping children develop the skills needed to care for their environment.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or

(b) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that moves premises on or after 30 June 2016,

shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had appropriate facilities to provide a range of different play experiences both indoors and outdoors for the children. All the playrooms were spacious with defined interest areas that had a range of play materials accessible on low level shelving. The service was in the process of changing resources within the Infant Montessori Room 1 and 2 to ensure that a greater variety of materials were available to the children.
- (b) There were appropriate rest facilities available to the children dependant on their requirements. All care rooms had appropriate rest areas with soft furnishings and matting. Cots and stackable beds were available for the children as required with sperate sheets and blankets for each child.
- (2)
- (a) The younger children had access to an outdoor area located to the rear of the premises. Older children had access to the outdoor area to the side of the building as well as the balconies off each of the care room on the first floor. The outdoor areas were interconnecting and were secured by walls and fencing.

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 internal and external doors were secured as required and this prevented any children exiting unsupervised or unauthorised persons gaining access to the service. The ground floor and first floor entrances had a pin pad locking system in place.
- The indoor stairs had a handrail at child height and was adequately lit.
- The electrical cables observed were in good condition and out of the reach of children.
- All blind cords were appropriately secured on the day of inspection.

- Visibility strips had been applied to the glazed doors to prevent the children from colliding with the glass.
- Cleaning products and other harmful materials were stored out of the reach of children.
- The water was temperature controlled below 43°C and available throughout the service.

Infection control:

- Cleaning schedules were available and completed as required within the service.
- Disposable aprons and gloves were available for nappy changing.
- Children's handwashing was observed throughout the service. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available.
- The cots and beds were placed 50cm apart to prevent a risk of cross infection.
- The mattresses in the cots had the appropriate waterproof mattress protectors. Each child had their own allocation of bed linen.
- Lidded pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste in the sanitary area and care room.

Safe sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks were completed on an electronic application for children who slept. These checks included children's sleep position, colour and breathing.
- The sleep rooms were at the appropriate temperatures for the age ranges of the children.

Fire safety:

- Firefighting equipment was accessible within the service.
- The fire exits were free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

- A staff member did not adhere to infection control measures when completing nappy changing. Overall, hand hygiene in relation to nappy changing was observed to be in line with best practice. However, in one instance inspectors observed that a staff member did not change their gloves or wash their hands in between nappy changes. This posed a risk of cross infection to the children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

The service engaged in training on nappy changing practice and policy with relevant staff members.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

Training records submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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)

- (a) The service had records of the monthly fire drills that took place within the service. The last drill took place on 06 March 2025.
- (b) The certification of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated it was carried out on 02 April 2025. The certification of the smoke alarm testing was dated 21 March 2025.

(4) The services fire evacuation procedure was displayed within each room within the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An in-date certificate was in place to demonstrate that the service was insured to provide full day care for the number of children the service is registered to accommodate. The certificate was valid until 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The service appeared to be of sound and stable structure.
- (b) The building was safe and secure with pin pad access and a doorbell system in operation at the front door.
- (c) The building was well lit, there were large windows and glass doors to allow natural light. The building was heated appropriately and ventilated.
- (d) The building was cleaned and maintained to an appropriate standard.
- (e) The service had adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.