

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC112		
Name of Service:	Coomhola Montessori		
Address of Service:	Corran, Coomhola, Bantry, Cork		
Eircode:	P75 R851		
Name of Registered Provider:	Doreen Brady		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	17/01/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Social Work Dept, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, West Cork P81 PD78		
Inspection undertaken by:	M Carney		
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		

Description of service

Coomhola Montessori is a private early years care and education setting which is registered to cater for children aged 2 to 6 years on a daily basis. It operates from 9:30am to 12:30pm

The service is situated on an elevated rural position with views of Bantry Bay and Priests Leap in west Cork. It operates from the registered providers modern, detached residence and provides 2 interlinked playrooms, toilet facilities, and spacious outdoor play areas.

The registered provider has developed a spacious secured car park for use by the children and their families for the safe arrival and departure.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children and has employed a further 3 childcare professionals to work directly with the children.

Each adult has certification of Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in childcare training, ranging from Level 5 to Level 7.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Childcare 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.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued on the 17 January 2024 in relation to Safety, as the thermostatically controlled hot water was registering at 61 degrees Celsius which posed a scald risk to the children.

The registered provider responded within 24 hours with an adequate response.

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.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

(a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,

(b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,

(c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The registered provider worked directly with the children and was the person in charge. A deputy had been employed to deputise as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present and available to facilitate the inspection process. Examination of the staff roster indicated that at least 2 adults were always on the premises during service operation.

(2)(a) & (b)

There was a total of 4 adults attached to the service and each of their files were examined. The following information was obtained -

There were 5 written past employer references available and 3 written references from sources that the registered provider considered to be reputable.

Each written reference had the correct record of validation attached.

(c)

There were 3 up to date Garda vetting disclosures on file. The remaining up to date Garda vetting disclosure was forwarded via email to the early years office the following day.

(d)
Police vetting was available for 1 adult who had lived and worked outside the jurisdiction of Ireland for a period of 6 consecutive months or longer.

(4)
Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in childcare training were on file ranging from Level 5 to Level 7.

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

Whilst the service had a healthy eating policy in place, on review of the it was found to be incomplete, for example it did not include the following information -

- That the parents and guardian’s choices are supported.
- It did not describe how food is safely stored and served.
- It did not detail how the children are supervised whilst eating.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action & Supporting Documentation Submitted

The registered provider stated that the healthy eating policy has been updated to include that parent and guardian’s choices are supported, how the food is stored and how the children are supervised whilst eating. The updated policy was submitted.

Summary Comment

Documentation in the form of a healthy eating policy was submitted to the early years office; it was reviewed and found to adequately meet the Requirements of this section of Regulation 22.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(3)

There were 19 children aged from 3 to 4 years attending on a sessional basis with 3 adults in attendance. The adult child ratios were correct.

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 total of 22 enrolment forms were reviewed and the following information was correctly documented on each form.
- (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;
 - (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;
 - (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the children.

Non-Compliance Information

- The following information was not completed on the enrolment forms reviewed –
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child was not entered on 5 forms;
 - (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child was not completed on 3 forms;

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action & Supporting Documentation Submitted

The registered provider stated that the above forms were immediately updated and that parents have been reminded to complete on their children's enrolment forms both authorisation for collection and records of immunisations received.

Notice sent to parents and guardians submitted to evidence parents had been reminded of the above.

Summary Comment

The Requirements have been met.

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;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

The following records were reviewed in relation to the service –

- (1)
- (h) A register to record the children’s attendance maintained on a daily basis;
 - (i) Up to date staff rosters were made available;
 - (j) The service had a logbook developed by an agency associated with early years settings for the correct recoding of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent. There were no entries.
 - (k) A logbook was made available for the recording of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service. There were no entries.

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:

- Parents and guardians supplied their children with all their food and drink items.
- Most of the food eaten were seen to be healthy, nutritious and varied for example, sandwiches, cold meats, chicken, fruit, chipped vegetables and yogurts.
- Lunch time was eaten at approximately 11:30am. The children sat with their friends and enjoyed conversation in a sociable manner whilst they ate.
- The children were encouraged to use the toilet facilities independently and were assisted as necessary. Flushing and hand washing was gently prompted.
- The children's outdoor wear, coats, boots, hats and scarfs were stored on a unit accessible to the children to encourage independent dressing for both the outdoor play area and in readiness for home time.
- Aprons were available for the children to wear during messy play or art activities.
- The children had access to a rest area which provided seating on low window ledging which was furnished with throws, cushions, soft toys and matting for the children's comfort. The children were seen taking themselves to the area after lunch to choose a book, enjoy quiet time and await their friends.
- The service provided ample sufficient floor space for the children to enjoy free play, socialisation and participate in gross motor skill activities.

Physical and Material Environment –

- Coomhola Montessori operated from a designated wing of the registered providers home which had been suitable adapted to provide a sessional service. It was clean and well maintained.
- The children had access to 2 interlinked playrooms that were laid out in a thematic manner and furnished with sufficient sized child sized tables, chairs and low open display units for the children's easy access to materials. It was clean, brightly decorated and well maintained.
- The rooms had openable windows which allowed for natural light and ventilation.

- Both rooms provided a wide range of age-appropriate play resources and materials to both entertain and encourage valuable play experiences to the children. Tabletop activities included, peg boards, jig saws, matching games and small construction.
- There was a wide range of Montessori equipment and resources that were pleasingly displayed and in good working order.
- There was a home corner with a wide range of well-maintained utensils to encourage the children's imaginative play.
- A designated corner of the room was devoted to circle time where the reading of stories and sharing of news could be conducted.
- The small playroom was equipped with larger construction items cars and trucks.
- There was a large unit for the storage of additional resources in readiness for rotation.
- There was an abundant supply of art and crafts and evidence of the children's art works displayed on the glazed units.
- The walls of the room were adorned with many colourful displays such as the cupcake birthday chart and family photograph collage.
- The children had direct access to many outdoor play areas. The hard surface area allowed for cycling, balance practice and sensorial play such as sand and water play.
- There was an outdoor playhouse, slide, see saws to entice social and gross motor skill play.
- A large field was equipped with football nets and balls, climbing frames, swings and balance tyres.
- A newly designed play area provided rock climbing experiences for the children.

Supporting Relations Around the Children

- Each of the childcare professionals demonstrated a kind and positive manner with the children for example, only low tones were used, on-to-one and group work was carried out at the child's level with good eye contact. An adult was observed to quietly encourage a child to use his words in order to express his needs.
- Toileting and preparation for the outdoor play area and preparation for lunch was conducted by the adults with patience and a happy manner.
- Child led activities were promoted in the outdoor playgrounds with gently assistance.
- The children were observed to be familiar with their environment, relaxed and cheerful.

- The service was integrated with the local community and had invited a local farmer to bring in baby lambs to share with the children. Parents with talents and skill sets were also invited to the service to share with the children such as the American Thanksgiving celebrations.
- The registered provider communicated with the children’s families via a digital application to inform of policies, and information regarding the service.

Implementation of the Programme of Care

- The service provided a Montessori pedagogy.
- A pictorial daily timetable was displayed and evidenced that sufficient time was allocated for free play, outdoor play, lunch and circle time and arts and crafts.
- Learning records and photographs of the children were displayed to demonstrate activity involvement.
- Photographs of the children mastering activities were shared with the families via digital application.
- Outings to the library and a boat to see the baby seals was conducted.
- On the day of the inspection the children capitalized on the dry, sunny but cold weather to explore, play and socialise in the large outdoor play area.

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 parents provided their children with all their food and drink items.
- Most of the lunches were seen to be nutritious, varied, and sufficient for example, fruits, crackers, wraps, chicken and cheese sandwiches and yogurts.
- The service made available an ample supply of cutlery and plates to the children.

Non-Compliance Information

1. During the lunch meal it was observed that a child was eating a chocolate spread sandwich which was not a healthy option for a sandwich filler.
2. The children's water bottles were stored in their bags and not easily accessible so that they could freely drink and hydrate as they wished.
3. Although a fridge was available in the smaller playroom for the storage of the children's lunches, only 4 lunches were observed to be stowed. A child was eating chicken drumstick which had not been refrigerated, which posed a risk of contamination.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action & Supporting Documentation Submitted

The registered provider stated that –

1. The healthy eating policy has been resent to parents to remind them of the correct healthy lunch requirement.

An updated healthy eating policy was submitted.

2. Water bottles are now stowed on a water station for the children's easy access

A photograph of the water station was submitted.

3. The fridge is now being used for the children's lunches.

A photograph was submitted to evidence this practice.

Summary Comment

Documentation in the form of a policy and photographs were submitted to the early years office; the information was reviewed and found to be satisfactory.

The Requirements have been addressed.

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 parents and children had their own access to the service which was suitably secured so as to restrict unauthorised access and prevent a child from leaving the service unsupervised.
- Internal doors to the registered providers residence were secured so that the children could not access the domestic areas.
- The emergency exit was unobstructed.
- The staff members stored all their personal items out of reach of the children.
- Cables and flexes were not accessible to the children.
- Openable windows were out of reach of the children.
- Visibility strips had been applied to the glazed units.
- Cleaning products were out of reach of the children.
- Toys equipment and the vast range of outdoor play equipment was found to be free from pinch points or sharp edges.

Infection Control:

- Coomhola Montessori was clean, well maintained and in a good state of repair.
- Regular hand washing was observed by both the children and the staff members such as before lunch and after outdoor play.
- There were 2 toilets and 2 wash hand basins situated in the toilet area. They were clean and well maintained with toilet tissue, clean step ups and toilet seats available for the children's comfort.
- Hand wash posters promoted the correct hand wash routine.
- Liquid soap and paper towels were available.
- An additional sink unit was installed in the large playroom to provide additional hand wash facilities.
- The staff members had their own designated toilet and wash hand basin which were clean and well maintained.
- Tissues were available for nose hygiene.
- Lidded and non-contact pedal bins were in operation.

Administration of Medication:

- It was reported that the staff members were familiar with the procedures that are to be followed in the event of a child requiring medications.
- There were currently no children attending the service that required medications.

Fire Safety:

- In conversation with the registered provider, it was stated that each staff member was familiar with the procedures required to be followed in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The thermostatically controlled hot water registered at 61 degrees Celsius which posed a scald risk to the children.

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued by email on the day.

Fire Safety:

2. The fire cylinders were not tethered to the walls.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action & Supporting Documentation Submitted

General Safety:

1. The registered provider responded within the 24-hour timeframe and stated that the thermostat had been reset. Going forward the registered provider stated that a daily check on the water temperatures will be carried out.

A photograph of the reset thermostat was submitted to evidence that the issue had been addressed.

2. A photograph of the tethered fire cylinders to the wall was submitted

Summary Comment

The Requirements have been suitably met.

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)

The registered provider had first aid responder (FAR) certification on file which had an expiry date of October 2025. The additional 3 staff members had first aid training certification with a paediatric component.

(2)(a) & (b)

The first box was stored on a high shelf in the smaller playroom, out of the children's reach but accessible to the staff. The first aid box was suitably equipped with the required medical supplies.

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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premise.

(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 registered provider maintained a record of the fire drills which had been conducted in the service. The most recent drill was completed on the 11 January 2024.

(1)(b)

Written evidence was available from a reputable person to demonstrate that the number, type and location of the fire fighting equipment provided in the service at the time of inspection was appropriate for the type of service being operated.

Evidence was available in the form of receipts that the firefighting equipment was purchased and replaced annually.

(4)

A fire evacuation plan was displayed in the playrooms to provide a visual guide of the procedures that are to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service displayed an up -to-date insurance certificate which stated that up to 22 children were adequately insured to attend on a sessional basis. The expiry date was 22 March 2024.