

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015CC115
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Countryside Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Rossa, Doneraile, Co. Cork
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<b>Eircode:</b>	P51 YK25
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Norma O'Brien
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	10/11/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	27	PM	18
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Second Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	F Collins EYI & M Lynch, Deputy Head of Regulatory Practice.
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<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

Countryside Montessori is a privately-owned part-time service that offers part time and sessional care to children aged between two and six years. The service is located in the rural hinterland of Doneraile in North Cork. The part time service operates daily between 8:30 and 1:30. The first sessional service operates between 8:30 and 11:30 and a second sessional service offered between 11:45 and 14:45 daily.

The premises is a converted house where there are two care rooms with adjacent toilet facilities an outdoor classroom and three outdoor play areas. The outdoor play areas consist of a tarmacadam area to the front and grass covered areas to the side and rear of the premises.

The service is secured from the road by suitable fencing and with locks to all gates ensuring the children cannot access the busy road.

### Staffing

There were nine staff members working in the service off which seven inclusive of the registered provider were present on the day of inspection. The staff providing direct care to the children were qualified between level 5 and level 8 on the national qualification's framework.

### 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 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, 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) The registered provider ensured that there was a person in charge in the service during the operation of the service. On the day of inspection, the named deputy person in charge was onsite when the inspectors arrived and the registered provider arrived shortly after.
  - (b) The staff roster indicated there was at all times a named a person in charge or a named deputy onsite.
  - (c) All staff were aware of the management structure within the service.
- (2) There were eight adults named as being available to work in the service and a contractor also worked in the service on a routine basis. All nine adults' files were assessed.
- (a) Of the 18 references required, 13 validated references were available from past employers.
  - (b) Four validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.
  - (c) Up to date Garda Vetting was available on file for each of the nine adults named as working in the service.
  - (d) Police vetting was available for the one staff member whose service history indicated the need for same.
- (4) The eight staff that work with the children daily were qualified at Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (a)/(b) One validated reference was not available on file for one adult that works in the service.
- (d) It could not be ascertained if an adult working with the children required police vetting as the service history record indicated gaps in service where it could not be relied upon to indicate the adult had not worked in another state outside of the country for greater than six months.
- Not appropriately vetting all adults working in the service may allow for adults that may not be suitable have access to the children.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

- (2)
- (a) The outstanding reference was received after the inspection.
- (d) The outstanding curriculum vitae was received after the inspection which indicated that police vetting was not required for the one adult. The registered provider has committed that all staff vetting will be completed before staff commence within the service.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

- (2) (a) A validated employer reference was received.
- (d) A curriculum vitae was received.

### **Summary Comment**

The requirements as assessed 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.*
- (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).*

### Compliance Information

- (1) There were adequate staff working with the children during the operation of the service. There were 7 staff working directly with the 27 children attending the service during the morning session. The children were cared for in two separate rooms.
- (2) Four staff were working directly with the 17 children attending the Blooms room (older children) during the morning sessional hours. There were 3 staff working directly with the 10 children in the Buds room (younger children) during the morning session.
- During the operation of the part-time service, which was facilitated in the Blooms room, 11.30-13.30 there were 3 staff caring for the 14 children who remained in the service for part time care.
- There were two staff caring for four children attending the afternoon sessional service facilitated in the Buds room.
- (4) The registered provider ensured that the adult child ratio for the:
- (a) Sessional service was correct with 7 adults caring for 27 children aged 3-4 years.
  - (b) For the part-time service 3 adults cared for the 14 children in the Blooms room. Two adults cared for the younger children where 4 children attended the second sessional 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

(1) (a) – (i) A sample of 12 records across both care rooms were reviewed and 11 of the 12 records reviewed contained all information as outlined in (a) –(i) above.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (f) The records for one child whose records were assessed did not contain all of the required. Information regarding a potentially serious medical condition was not recorded. However, through conversation with the staff it was ascertained that the child had a history of having a potential serious medical need that may require medication was not outlined in the child’s notes where a plan to care for the child was not outlined.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(1) (f) The enrolment form was updated at the end of the session with the child’s medical needs updated by one of the child’s parents. The registered provider has committed to ensuring that all children’s information will be obtained and available prior to children starting in the service and where medical care plans are required these will be developed appropriately.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

(1) (f) The updated enrolment form was observed by the inspectors.

### Summary Comment

The requirement for this regulation as assessed has been met.

### 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's needs were met around food and drink provision. Snacks were served in the Buds room at 10.30 am. Drinks of water were available to the children throughout the day, and the drinks were brought to the table at snack time.
- Children that required nappy changes were changed on a routine basis and as advised by the staff nappies would also be changed as required.
- The temperature of the Buds care room was at 18.3°C @09.56am. The windows were open to allow for ventilation and ensure the comfort of the children.
- The older children toileted independently and assistance was given with the younger children who needed reminders with hand washing and with their clothing.
- There were rest areas accessible to the children in both care rooms where they could rest and opt out of activities as they wished. There were children's sized couches and mats available for use.
- The children were free to move about and access the equipment independently.
- No child required sleep on the day of inspection.
- Children that required additional support received same and where required inclusion plans were readily accessible to the staff.

##### Supporting Relationships:

- The children were supported by the staff at snack time and lunch time when a staff member sat at each table and provided support to the children when required.
- The service communicated with parents daily at drop off and collection. Staff members were observed to talk with the parents. This process was repeated in the afternoon, where the staff were observed to talk to parents at the second drop off.

- Each child was supported to participate in each activity, and it was observed when some needed more help this was offered.
- The children knew each of the staff and sought their help when needed.

### **Physical and Material Environment:**

- The layout of the indoor environment allowed for the children to be independent when choosing and doing activities. There were areas of interest, and these were grouped so children could play in small and large groups.
- Child height tables were accessible, and the children could sit at these in comfort and participate in colouring, playing with tabletop activities and when eating.
- Gross motor development was encouraged outside when using the climbing frame and slide, or when using the ride on toys. In the Blossoms room the children also participated in yoga after coming in from outside.
- Fine motor development was encouraged through use of arts and crafts, blocks and bricks
- Sensory play was developed using large sand trays where the children had access to sand and found materials such as leaves and using the shovels to play.

### **Programme of Activities:**

- The children were observed to participate in a schedule of activities such as free play, outdoor activities and circle time activities. All were to promote the sensory, language and motor development of each child.
- There was a language rich environment noted with children encouraged to talk, recite and participate in stories.

### **Outdoor Environment:**

- The outdoor environment consisted of three areas. The area outside the care room door was covered in tarmacadam and this was where the play house, sand trays and ride on equipment was used.
- The grass areas were not used on the day of inspection due to the very heavy rain the previous few days.

### 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 doors into the service were secured with thumb turn locks and no child could leave the premises unattended.
- The outdoor space was secured by a series of gates with running bolts, spring bolts and secure fencing.
- The window openings were out of the reach of the children.
- The electric cables were out of reach of the children and were made safe.
- The toys assessed were safe and did not appear to have any pinch or crush points.
- The cleaning equipment was stored out of reach of the children.
- There was no full-length glass door which may cause an injury to a child.
- No hot drinks were consumed by the staff near the children.
- The shelving units were not high enough to be pulled down by a child if climbed on.
- The play equipment outside was dried by the staff before the children went outside

##### Infection Control:

- The food for snack and lunchtime was stored in the fridge to prevent contamination of the perishable items.
- The bags and coats for the children were stored off the ground on accessible hooks.
- The windows were opened to ensure good air circulation.
- The service was cleaned daily, and the cleaning sheets were signed by the staff.
- The rubbish was inaccessible, all bins inside were lidded and pedal operated.
- Tables were cleaned with appropriate disinfectant after tabletop activities and before snack and lunch time.
- There was hot water in the sinks in the children's toilets and in the care room. The water temperatures recorded in the children's sinks was 35.8, 33.6 and 35.1°C respectively.
- There was liquid hand soap and paper towels beside the sinks in use.

##### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.
- Temperature reducing medication was available on a high shelf in the fridge should same be required.

## Safe Sleep:

- No child was observed to sleep on the day of inspection.

## Fire Safety:

- The fire exit doors were not blocked.
- The firefighting equipment was safely tethered to the walls for ease of use should they be required full stop

## Non-Compliance Information

### Infection Control:

1. The hot water in the sink in the adult's toilet was not working with only cold water available. The registered provider requested a plumber to attend to the water heater as soon as possible. Not having access to warm water may impede effective hand washing and potentially increase the risk of cross infection.
2. The staff were observed not to remind the children to wash their hands when coming in from outside and before they did yoga. Not washing hands after coming in from outdoor play may increase the risk of contamination and cross infection.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

### Infection Control:

1. The hot water in the adult toilets was assessed by the plumber on the afternoon of the inspection, and the hot water was working correctly following a low-pressure outage. The registered provider will assess that there is hot water available each day prior to the opening of the service.
2. The registered provider has reviewed the hand washing policy with the staff and the staff have been reminded to ensure the children wash their hand in accordance with the policy. This will be reviewed by the registered provider.

### Supporting documentation submitted

### Infection Control:

1. A letter from the plumber has been received certifying that the hot water is working.
2. The procedure regarding hand washing has been received.

## Summary Comment

The requirements as assessed for this regulation has been met.

### 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*

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

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1) A child had been signed into the service as having arrived at 08.30 however when reviewing the children in attendance this child was absent. This inaccurate record may cause confusion should the service need to be evacuated in an emergency.

(3) (b) A record of all persons into the service other than those identified in (a) above were not maintained. This may hinder the registered provider when identifying visitors to the service retrospectively.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) The error in signing a child into the service was corrected on the day of inspection and the registered provider has committed to ensuring that the staff are aware of the importance of accurate signing in and out of the children.

(3) (b) A visitors sign in book was created on the day of inspection. Staff have been informed of the need to use this record when visitors enter the service.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

The assurances received on the corrective and preventive action form are accepted as proof that the requirements are met as these actions were observed on inspection.

#### Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation as assessed have been met.

### 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 premises appeared to be of sound and stable structure with no obvious deficits.
- (b) The building was safe and secure with thumb turn locks on the doors and the gates outside secured by various running bolts and sliding clips.
- (c) The premises was lit via windows, and this was augmented by fluorescent lighting to provide sufficient light for the children to work and play. The heating was sufficient and Buds room temperature was recorded at 18.3°C at 09.56 and the temperature of the Blossoms room was recorded at 17.9°C at 12.42. ventilation was through openable windows, and no obvious mould or mildew were evident.
- (d) The service was cleaned as required. There was a small tear to the floor covering in the Blossoms room however the registered provider was aware and a plan was already in place to replace the covering within two weeks.
- (e) There were three children's toilets and wash hand basins and one adult toilet available to the staff.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

*(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.*

*(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

(1) The care rooms were measured:

Montessori room 1 (Blossoms) this room measured 35.50SqM.

Montessori room 2 (Buds): this room measured 24.4SqM.

It is planned that an additional area will be added within the next 4 weeks, this room measured 3.51 SqM and is adjacent to the Blossoms room.

(2) The total space in the service will be 63.41SqM when the additional space is added. This is suitable for 26 children attending on a part time basis.

(3) The space available will be suitable for 33 children attending on a sessional basis.