

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC139
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Name of Service:	East Cork Montessori
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Address of Service:	Old school building, Castlemartyr, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P25 D968
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Name of Registered Provider:	Katrine Holland
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork
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

East Cork Montessori first notified in 2014. It is a privately owned, sessional early years service, that accommodates children aged two to six years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year. Registered opening hours are from 8.30am to 12.00pm and from 12.45pm to 4.00pm. However, the morning sessional service is currently provided between 8.45am and 11.45am and the afternoon session is from 12.30pm to 3.30pm.

The premises is located near the village of Castlemartyr in Co. Cork and operates from a former primary school building. There are two care rooms, with adjoining sanitary facilities and the children have the use of an outdoor play space at the rear of the building.

Staffing

There is a total of five adults employed at the early years setting, all of whom are involved in the direct care of the children. This includes the registered provider and two adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme. Each of the five adults have attained a relevant award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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) The registered provider was in charge of operating the service. The requirement for a deputy person in charge was also met.
 - (b) The registered provider was available for the duration of the inspection process.
- (2) The recruitment records for all staff members were assessed. In respect of the five files that were presented for examination:
- (a) Eight past employer references and validations were on file.
 - (b) Two written and validated references were in place from sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) There was evidence that Garda vetting had been obtained for all of the adults.
 - (d) Police vetting was not deemed to be required for four of the adults.

(4) Evidence of attainment of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or as recognised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) was available for each of the five adults, who were employed to work directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)
(d) The required police vetting was unavailable for one of the staff members, who had resided outside the State as an adult, for longer than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has advised that an application for the police vetting has been made.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of the police vetting application was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The police vetting certificate remains outstanding and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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.

Compliance Information

The service's policy on Healthy Eating was assessed and deemed satisfactory.

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.*
- (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

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children, throughout the inspection period.
- (3) Adequate adult to child ratios were observed in both care rooms, which were in operation as follows:

Room Name and Age Range of Children	Number of Children Present	Number of Adults Present
Room 1 (3 – 4 ½ years)	12	2 + 1 AIM Support
Room 2 (3 – 4 ½ years)	10	1 + 1 AIM Support

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 children who attended both care rooms had an opportunity to enjoy a mid-morning snack, during the morning sessional service. This part of the daily routine was notably calm and pleasant, with plenty of time allocated for the children to eat and chat with one another.
- Easy access to drinking water was facilitated for the children, including during outdoor play. Large containers, positioned at child height, were used to store their reusable water bottles.
- The children were supported to use the toilet independently, with prompts and assistance offered by the adults, as required.
- The adults provided frequent reminders to children in relation to personal care, for example, children were reminded to clean their noses. Tissues were also accessible to the children.
- A designated rest area was incorporated into each care room, for children to use as needed.
- The children were observed to move freely throughout the indoor environments, as they engaged in their chosen activities. Further opportunities for more active play and movement were facilitated in the outdoor play area.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The adults were noted to be patient, engaging and respectful towards the children in their care and demonstrated an awareness of the children's individual needs and personalities. For example, staff members were responsive to children's cues and readily joined in their free play activities.
- Children had the opportunity to take on helper roles, such as giving out the plates before snack time and washing up the plates afterwards.

- An online application was used to share information and relevant updates with parents and guardians. At collection time, it was observed that parents were warmly greeted by staff members and were informed that an inspection was taking place.
- The registered provider advised that staff members were in the process of completing a mentoring programme with a third level college, which focused on supporting children with additional learning needs.

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 Healthy Eating policy in place was suitable for a sessional category service and included *Lunch Box Ideas* for parents and guardians.
- The food and drinks for the children’s snack breaks were provided by their parents or guardians. Healthy eating was promoted and was reflected in the nutritious and varied foods supplied. Examples included filled wraps, soda bread, ham sandwiches, crackers, rice cakes, yogurt and a range of fruit, such as blueberries, raspberries, grapes, oranges and bananas, with water to drink.
- During discussion, the registered provider advised that if a child expressed that they were hungry outside of the designated meal time, they would be encouraged to have a drink of water or could choose a snack from their lunch box. This was in keeping with the service’s Healthy Eating policy, which outlined that children who have not eaten or who are hungry, are offered food at times outside routine meal and snack times.
- The inspector was informed that none of the children who attended had any specific dietary requirements or food allergies. As a precaution, a nut free policy was in place at the service.

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:

- During outdoor play, a staff member remained at the entrance to the outdoor play space, in order to reduce the risk of a child exiting, while unsupervised.
- The children's access to the staff sanitary facility was prevented; the door to this area was secured when not in use, with the key stored on a high-level hook.
- The available firefighting equipment was safely tethered.
- There were radiator covers in place to reduce the risk of a child sustaining a scald injury.
- The television in Room 1 was wall mounted, with the attached cable secured.
- Electrical sockets at child level were fitted with safety plugs.

Infection Control:

- A supply of warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the children's wash hand basins. Children were encouraged to wash their hands after outdoor play and before eating their snacks.
- A small refrigerator was in use in Room 2, to maintain the children's perishable foods between 0°C and 5°C, as required.
- Suitable crockery was provided for the children's snack time.
- The children's personal belongings were appropriately stored above floor level. Bags were placed on shelving units and coats were hung on wall hooks.
- Cleaning was undertaken by staff members in between the morning and afternoon sessional services. This was observed to include hoovering and sanitising surfaces.
- Adequate ventilation of Room 1 was ensured through open windows.

Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication to children was not observed. Further to this, the inspector was informed that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- None of the children were noted to sleep during the inspection period.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were unobstructed.

Outings:

- Not applicable, as the registered provider advised that outings were not undertaken.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the early years service was not prevented. The main entrance door was observed to be unsecured during the sessional service. This door led directly to the two care room doors, both of which had key locks on the exterior, with the keys stored in the locks.
2. During the mid-morning snack in Room 2, it was noted that 1 of the children had been provided with grapes, which had not been halved and therefore posed as potential choking hazards. The inspector brought this to the attention of a staff member and prompted that the grapes should be halved, however, this was not ensured following said discussion.

Infection Control:

3. Liquid soap, required for effective handwashing, was observed to be unavailable in the staff sanitary facility.
4. In Room 1, the children's perishable snacks, which included yogurts, yogurt drinks and ham sandwiches, were not refrigerated prior to snack time. This increased the risk of food spoilage and was also found at the previous inspection on 31 August 2021. The CAPA response at the time stated that this issue had been rectified, however, this was not found in practice.
5. Foot pedal operated bins were not provided in either of the children's sanitary facilities, which increased the risk of cross infection. This issue was also found at the previous inspection. In the CAPA response submitted at the time, the registered provider outlined that new pedal bins had been placed in each toilet facility, however, this was not observed in practice.
6. The staff sanitary facility was used to store various items, such as a mop and bucket, a floor brush, a buggy, a basin, a jug and a large bamboo musical instrument. This posed a risk of cross infection and was also found at the previous inspection on 31 August 2021. The CAPA response provided following said inspection stated that the mop and other items had been moved to a space outdoors, however, storage in the staff sanitary facility remained an issue.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The response stated that once the children are in their classrooms, the keys will be kept in the possession of the adults. The main entrance door will remain unsecured , however, the inner doors to both classrooms will be secured.
2. A message has been sent to all parents via an application, to ensure that grapes are cut in half.

Infection Control:

3. Liquid soap is now available in the staff toilet facility.
4. A fridge has been installed in Room 1.
5. Foot pedal operated bins are now in place in all of the toilet facilities.
6. The mop and bucket have been moved to the back kitchen cabinet, along with the buggy.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. & 2. The statements from the registered provider are accepted as evidence.

Infection Control:

3. Photographic evidence.
4. A photograph of the fridge.
5. Photographic evidence.
6. The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The response statements and evidence submitted by the registered provider are accepted in meeting the regulatory requirements.

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 available records demonstrated that one of the adults had undertaken First Aid Responder (FAR) training and the relevant certification was on display.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a)(b)
- The use-by date had expired on all of the available medium and large sterile wound dressings and on the one available sterile eye pad dressing. There were no extra-large sterile wound dressings in the first aid kits and only five triangular bandages were maintained, where six were required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The response submitted advised that the first aid kits had been cleared prior to the inspection, to allow for restocking. The first aid kits have been restocked and supplies are in date.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the recently purchased first aid supplies.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider was deemed to meet regulatory compliance with regulation 25.

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 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) Previously conducted monthly fire drills were recorded in writing and maintained on file. The most recently undertaken fire drill was dated 13 October 2023.
 - (b) The number and type of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were recorded. The firefighting equipment was last serviced in January 2023 and the wired smoke alarm was tested on 12 October 2023.
- (4) A written document, which outlined the service's fire evacuation procedures, was displayed in Room 2.