

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:	01/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Office, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork. T23X440.
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter and D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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 is a privately owned, sessional early years service, that accommodates children aged 2 to 6 years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme is facilitated each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year. The service operates two sessions per day: 08:45 to 11:45 and 12:30 to 15:30.

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. At the time of inspection, only one of the care rooms was in use.

Staffing

At present there are three staff attached to the service, including the registered provider, who works directly with the children. All three adults hold a recognised 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 inspectors wish 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, 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 the person in charge at the early years service and a deputy had been assigned to deputise in her absence.
 - (b) The registered provider was working at the service when the inspectors arrived and remained for the duration of the inspection. The staff roster also indicated that the registered provider was available throughout the hours of operation.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider, it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection on 15 November 2023. Both staff members worked directly with the children. A total of two files were assessed.
- (a) There were three written and validated references on file from past employers.
 - (b) One of the references was from a source other than a previous employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for both staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Not applicable, as none of the adults had resided outside the State, as adults.
- (4) The two adults had each attained a recognised award in Early Childhood Care and Education, with copies of the corresponding certificates on file.

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 policy on accidents and incidents for the service was reviewed and deemed to meet regulatory compliance.

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 has ensured an adequate number of staff were working with all of the children throughout the day.
- (3) There were 3 staff working directly with 20 children aged between 3 and 5 years on the day of inspection, therefore the service surpassed the minimum requirement.

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:*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*
- (5) For the purposes of operating the pre-school service, a record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider.*

Compliance Information

- (1) (k)
- On the day of inspection, there were eight records of accidents and two records of incidents available to the inspectors for review. All records were filled correctly and had been signed by both relevant staff and a parent. These records were in line with the service's policy on accidents and incidents.
- (5) The records of accidents and incidents were open to the inspectors on the day of inspection.

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)

Physical and material environment:

- Child sized tables and chairs were readily accessible for the children's use during tabletop activities.
- The children were reflected throughout the care room. For example, their recently completed Christmas themed artwork was displayed, along with their birthdays and family photographs.
- The indoor environment was resourced with developmentally appropriate equipment, which was stored on low-level shelving, within easy reach for the children:
 - Opportunities to enhance fine motor skills and practical life skills were provided through jigsaws, threading materials, connectable shapes, magnets and a variety of Montessori materials.
 - Play resources such as building blocks and hand-held vehicles encouraged construction play.
 - A variety of art and craft materials and play dough, facilitated creative and exploratory play.
 - Language development was supported through a range of books and mark making materials.
- The outdoor play area included equipment such as a climbing frame, cones, balance discs and goal posts, which accommodated active play and gross motor development. Sand and digging toys promoted messy play and exploration, while imaginary play was encouraged through the availability of playhouses, dolls, a play kitchen and utensils.

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 entrance door to the care room was secured on arrival and was answered by a staff member, ensuring no unauthorised adult could gain entry.
- Windows in the service were inaccessible to the children as they were located at adult height.
- All flexes and cords were secured out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning materials and agents were stored on a high shelf, out of reach of the children.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing.
- Firefighting equipment was safely wall mounted.

Infection control:

- Wash hand basins in use in the service were supplied with thermostatically controlled warm water, 28.7°C and 29.3°C dispensing soap, and paper towels. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste in the sanitary areas.
- Hygienic handwashing was observed, after toileting.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the fridge, preventing the food from spoiling.
- Windows were open to allow for natural ventilation.
- Shelf storage was provided for the children's bags and wall hooks were in use to store their coats.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed.
- Fire exit signage was illuminated.

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

- (2)
- (a) The registered provider had ensured that a suitably equipped first aid box was available at all times.
- (b) The first aid box was stored safely in the care room and was available to the children at all times. The inspector observed the registered provider to bring the first aid bag to the outdoor area when the children went outside to play.

Non-Compliance Information

While it was acknowledged that two staff members had paediatric first aid and that at least one of these adults was on site during the service's hours of operation, there was no staff member available to the children who had an up to date certification in First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The registered provider provided evidence to the inspectors on the day of inspection of a booking for a FAR course commencing in January. The service previously had a person employed, trained in FAR, up to the end of October.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A staff member has been enrolled on a FAR course.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the booking.

Summary Comment

The corrective action submitted was deemed to mitigate the risk of the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 (1). The FAR certificate will be inspected on next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

- (e)
- The service had separate sanitary accommodations for adults and children.
 - Both sanitary accommodations were adequately stocked with pedal bins, liquid soap, hot running water and paper towels.
 - The water in the adult's bathroom was measured at 29.5°C.
 - On the day of inspection, there were two toilets and two sinks available for the sole use of children.
 - On the day of inspection, there was one toilet and one sink available for the sole use of adults.
 - Children's toilets were suitably partitioned to provide children with privacy.