

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC172
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Name of Service:	Great Beginnings Montessori
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Address of Service:	Bridge Hall, Innishannon, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T12 XK5H
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Margaret Desmond
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	04/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	43	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child & Family Agency Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, West Cork P81 PD78
Inspection undertaken by:	M. O Reilly
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

Great Beginnings Montessori is a registered privately owned early years service in operation since 2015. The service provides education and care to children from 2 to 6 years offering a choice of sessional, part time or full day care service and for the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. At time of inspection the children were aged between 2 years 8 months and 6 years. The registered opening hours are from 07:30 to 18:00 hours each day. At time of inspection the service was operating from 08:00 to 16:00 hours each day Monday to Friday. The service also provides a breakfast club for school aged care children from 8 to 9am. The service operates from a historical schoolhouse, which is a listed building and care is provided in 2 playrooms. There is an adjacent outdoor area to the side of the building.

Staffing

At time of inspection, there were 7 adults employed at the early years setting involved in the direct care of the children who attend and the registered provider. Each of the 8 adults hold 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 and deputy, 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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The deputy who was the person in charge on day of inspection was present when the inspector arrived on the premises and remained for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider arrived later and was present for the feedback meeting
- (2)
- The recruitment records in relation to 8 adults who were employed at the service were the subject of the inspection.
- (a) Of the 16 required references, 10 references were from previous employers with records of validation on file.
- (b) Of the remaining references, 4 references were from another source other than a previous employer with records of validation on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for each of the 8 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) There was a police vetting record on file for one adult who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult.
- (4) The 8 adults attached to the service had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education with copies of the relevant qualifications on file.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(a)(b)
- Two validated references were not available on file for one staff member.
- There was no written evidence to confirm that the two references present for one staff member were validated.
- (d)
- A police clearance record was not on file for one staff member who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider in her written response has stated the following:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a)(b)
- Two references for one adult were obtained. Received written evidence that the two references were validated. The service will continue to request two references from all future employees and ensure that these are validated prior to employment.
- (d) In her written response the registered provider has stated that she has applied for the police clearance.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (a)(b) Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.
- (d) Proof of the application for the police clearance was forwarded to the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

Based on the actions outlined by the registered provider and the supporting documentation submitted, the requirements of Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(d) have been met. The processed police vetting record will be reviewed on the next inspection of the service.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A sufficient number of adults were observed to work with the children who attended the service.
- (2) At the time of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of regulation. The rooms in operation were as follows:

In the Senior room there were 18 children with 3 adults in attendance in the morning. There were 10 children in attendance in the afternoon, 4 of the children were attending full day care and 6 were attending part time with three adults in attendance

In the Junior room there were 4 adults and 25 children in attendance in the morning.

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:

- On inspection, a relaxed and calm environment was provided for the children, and it was observed that the adults spoke kindly and offered encouragement to each child.
- Staff were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children's efforts were readily acknowledged.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop independence regarding personal care and life skills, particularly, with hand washing and washing the ware after snack/mealtimes.
- The children were largely independent using the toilet and were supported appropriately by the adults to use the toilet, if necessary.
- Children had sufficient space to move about freely indoors and outdoors.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Both Montessori rooms were spacious, child-friendly, bright, and well-presented. One of the rooms opened directly into the outdoor play area.
- The indoor environment of the playrooms was laid out in defined interest areas, including Montessori materials/practical life including materials for the development of fine motor skills and self-independence. Home/ construction area, library, culture/geography, painting, and crafts area.
- The layout of the rooms promotes the independent access to all the materials to foster children's autonomy and freedom of choice.

- A quiet corner was in place to facilitate quiet time. A supply of sleep mats was available to facilitate sleep as required for children attending on a part time or full day care basis.
- There was a variety of materials and defined interest areas in the outdoor areas, including outdoor wheel tyres to climb on or through or make an obstacle course, mud kitchen, gravel/stone dig. The outdoor play area created a challenging, diverse, creative, and enriching experiences for all children. The surface of the outdoor area was mainly covered with an artificial grass cover.
- In the outdoor play area, there was a covered area for the storage of the children’s wellies, all weather pants and coats when playing outdoors.
- Children were observed to be facilitated to play outdoors for as long as they wished in small groups and mixed groups between both playrooms.

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 the food for the mid-morning snack which was observed to be healthy and nutritious with appropriate food portion sizes for the age group of the children in attendance. The food provided mainly consisted of sandwiches and different sliced fruit and vegetables. The service provided a jug of water and individual drinking glasses which was observed on the table for all snacks and mealtimes. The jug of water and drinking glasses was available to the children during the hours of operation.
- The service has a contract with a local deli that provided the hot meal for the children attending the full day care service. The hot meal is delivered daily to the service, in individual serving trays for each child. The food provided for the hot meal on day of inspection consisted of roast chicken, mashed potatoes, carrots and gravy.
- The service provided the food for the breakfast, second food break for the children attending part time and the afternoon snack for the children attending the full day care service. The service snack menu included toast and yoghurts, rice cake with butter, apple and kiwi, crackers butter and mixed grapes, toast and banana and yogurt and melon

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:

- Entry to the service was possible via the main door and this was observed secure when not in use on day of inspection. This minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the premises and reduced the likelihood of a child exiting, while unsupervised.
- The outdoor play area was securely enclosed by a combination of walls and secured gate and wooden door.
- All of the available cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach.
- Radiator guards were installed to prevent a child having access to the surface of the oiled fired storage heaters in the service.

Infection Control:

- Throughout the service, wash hand basins were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towel dispensers, for hygienic hand washing and drying. Handwashing by the children was observed before lunch, after toileting and outdoor play.
- Lidded, foot pedal operated bins were available for waste and disposal of single used papers towels throughout the service
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable items in both playrooms.

Safe Sleep:

- A cosy area with appropriate seating for a child to rest in addition to the available sleep mats was available. No child was observed sleeping at time of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The children had access to the cables to the side of the photocopier that was located in the Junior room. Due to the potential risk of injury to a child, children should have no access to electrical cables.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider in her written response has stated the following:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The electrical cables beside the photocopier are now secured in a cable box out of children's reach in the Junior room.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence of the cable box located in the Junior room was submitted.

Summary Comment

- Based on the actions outlined by the person in charge and the supporting documentation submitted, the requirement of Regulation 23 General Safety have now been 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 did ensure that there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certifications on file indicated that two staff members held current up to date training.

(2)

(a) The first aid boxes were safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid boxes were stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises

(b) The fully equipped first aid boxes were available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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) A record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the morning of the 2/10/2024 and in the afternoon on the 4/10/24
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced in October 2024.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for 55 children until 27/03/2025. The records detailed the category of service covered which was full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.

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

(c) The air temperature reading was recorded at between 19°C and 20°C in both playrooms and 19°C in the toilet facilities day of inspection

(d) Visually, the rooms were clean and bright with high ceilings. The walls, skirting boards, tiles and architraves were all in good repair. There were no signs of mould or dampness on the walls around the doors, windows and toilet areas as they all had been treated and a protective cladding had been placed on these walls. There was a daily and weekly cleaning record in place

(e) There were adequate toilet facilities for the proposed number of children and staff in the service. There were sufficient toilet facilities for the 54 children, with 5 children's toilets and 5 wash hand basins. There was 1 new combination toilet and wash basin for adult use.