

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC181
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Name of Service:	Héronswood Childcare Montessori
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Address of Service:	Holy Well National School, Church Road, Carrigaline, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P43 X957
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Cleary
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Office, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurranabraher, Cork. T23X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter
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).

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Description of service

Heronswood Childcare Montessori is situated in an urban setting on the grounds of a National School at Carrigaline, Co Cork. A service is provided to children aged between 2 and 6 years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 9.10 and 12.10 hours. A registered school age service is also provided. The service is carried out in a prefabricated single storey unit with 1 care room named the Orange room, which was specifically adapted as a childcare service.

Staffing

There are four staff associated with this service including the registered provider, who is not service based. On the day of inspection, there were three staff present.

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

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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 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.*

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(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 has ensured that there is a designated person in charge and a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge as well as the deputy person in charge was on the premises for the duration of the inspection. The roster for the service demonstrated that at least one of these people were always on site.

2.

There were four staff attached to the service and four staff files were assessed.

(a) Four of the eight references were available from a past employer and had been validated.

(b) Four of the eight references were available and validated from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all for staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required for the four members of staff as they had not resided outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

4.

All four staff members held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

1.

The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

3.

On the morning of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations. There were three adults available in the care room to work directly with the 14 children in attendance aged between 4 and 5 years.

8.

The registered provider has ensured that there were a minimum of two staff at all times on the premises. This was evidenced through. This was evidenced through the staff sign in and out sheets and through discussion with staff on the day.

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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 staff working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment.
- Children had access to water at all times throughout the inspection. A water station had been set up in the care room with a supply of cups should a child wish to take a drink.
- Children's toileting needs were attended to promptly and staff assisted children when necessary.
- Staff responded to children in low tones and communicated with them respectfully throughout the inspection.
- It was evident through observation on the day of inspection that children's voices were listened to, and children were able to communicate their needs to attentive adults. For example; when the inspector arrived, there was one teacher inside the care room and two teachers in the outdoor area. Children were free to choose to play in either the indoors or outdoors.
- Staff followed the interests of the children and evidence of this was visible in the service.
- Children were observed to eat healthy and nutritious food for their mid-morning snack.
- A rest area was provided in the care room should any child need to rest.
- The room was well laid out to encourage the children to move freely between the interest areas.
- Children were observed to play in the outdoor area on the morning of inspection.

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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 main entrance had been secured, and this ensured no unauthorised entry to, or exit from, the service.
- All play equipment appeared to be in a clean state and of good repair.
- Heavy equipment and furniture had been anchored to prevent them falling onto a child.
- All electrical cables or flexes were in good repair and out of reach of children.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children.
- The outdoor area had been securely fenced to prevent unauthorised entry to or from the area.
- The children's bags and coats were stored safely off the floor.

Infection Control:

- It was noted that children washed their hands when returning from outdoor play and before lunch.
- Perishable food for the children's lunch was refrigerated.
- Pedal bins were in operation throughout the service.
- Children's sanitary accommodations were fitted with liquid soap, paper towels and thermostatically controlled warm running water. Water temperatures throughout the service ranged from 28.7°C to 33.2°C.
- Windows had been opened to aid natural ventilation.
- Tables were sanitized before the children had their lunch.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were kept free and unobstructed.
- Wall tethered fire extinguishers were available in the care rooms.

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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 has ensured that there is an adult trained in first aid response (FAR) and that this staff member is always accessible to the children. This was evidenced through the staff roster.

2.

(a)(b) The registered provider has ensured that the care room is equipped with a suitably stocked first aid box which was easily accessible to staff should it be needed by the children at all times.

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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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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 has kept a written log of monthly fire drills. Through inspection of records it was observed that fire drills take place monthly with the last recorded fire drill taking place in April 2026.
 - (b) the registered provider has kept a written log of all firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. It was observed that all firefighting equipment has been serviced and maintained. The fire alarm system was last tested in January 2026, and the fire extinguishers were last tested in February 2026.
2.
 - (c) The registered provider has ensured that all records relating to fire safety are stored safely and are open to inspection by authorised persons.
4. The procedure to be followed in the event of a fire is displayed prominently within the main care room.