

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC234
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Name of Service:	Deirdre's Montessori Naíonra
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Address of Service:	Clifton House, Knockattigan, Quarry Road, Youghal, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P36 Y051
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre Mccarthy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	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

Deirdre's Montessori Naíonra has been in operation since 2006. It is privately operated and is registered to cater for children aged two to six years, on a sessional basis. The service uses Montessori based pedagogy and the use of the Irish language is also promoted. The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) is accommodated from 9.00am to 12.00pm daily, over 38 weeks of the year.

The early years setting is located outside the town of Youghal, in Co. Cork and is provided from a single storey, purpose-built premises, beside the registered provider's private residence. It consists of one operational care room, with adjoining child and adult sanitary facilities and a designated outdoor play space.

Staffing

The service employs two adults, both of whom work directly with the children who attend. The adults hold relevant awards in Early Childhood Care and Education and the registered provider has also completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years, special purpose award.

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 the 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, staff member 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 of overseeing the service. A deputy person in charge had also been identified, to deputise in her absence.
 - (b) The registered provider was onsite for the duration of the inspection process.
- (2) Recruitment records in relation to the two adults employed at the service were assessed.
- (a) There were two references on file from past employers, with corresponding records of validation.
 - (b) A further two of the required written and validated references were from sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting from the National Vetting Bureau was available in respect of the two adults.
 - (d) Not applicable. Police vetting was not required, as neither of the staff members had resided outside the State as adults.
- (4) The two adults had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications and copies of the relevant records were maintained.

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 Statement of Purpose and Function was reviewed and met the necessary requirements.

Non-Compliance Information

The Healthy Eating policy required further development, as it did not include the following:

It did not state that parents' and guardians' choices are supported.

It did not describe how food is safely stored, prepared and served.

It did not detail how children are supervised while eating and drinking.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The response submitted outlined that parents and guardians choices are supported in that they provide the snack for the children and this information will be included in the Healthy Eating policy. As food is not prepared at the service, the policy now states that parents prepare the food that the children consume. Information regarding how food is served will be included, along with how food is stored – all perishable items are placed in the fridge, other items are stored in a child's bag. Information as to how children are supervised while eating and drinking will also be included in the Healthy Eating policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the updated Healthy Eating policy.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 10.

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) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate amount of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children.
- (3) The adult to child ratio met the requirements of a sessional category service as follows:
There were 2 adults working directly with 16 children, who were aged 3 to 4 ½ years.

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:*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) A roll book was used to record relevant information in relation to the children's daily attendance and was found to be maintained up to date.

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 mid-morning meal was noted to take place at 10.20am. A relaxed environment was evident, as the children chatted together and the adults provided help to open food packaging and containers.
- The children could independently access the adjoining sanitary facility and were reminded to do so by the adults, at regular intervals throughout the morning.
- The children were assisted to clean their faces as required, after the snack break.
- Children's rest needs were met through the incorporation of a small teepee, with a soft play mat and a vinyl sofa, which was positioned alongside book shelves.
- The adults were observed to be kind, playful and patient during interactions with the children in their care. For example, the children's input was encouraged during story time and staff members were noted to support children to resolve minor disputes, before such incidents escalated.
- The spacious care room ensured that children had sufficient room to explore the various materials on offer.

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

- All food for the children’s snack breaks was provided by their parents or guardians. Examples noted at the time of inspection included sandwiches, crackers, rice cakes, cheese, yogurt and fruit such as oranges, apples, blueberries, dates and avocado, with water to drink.
- Drinking water could be obtained from a low-level sink in the main care room, with a supply of cups available for the children’s use.
- The registered provider confirmed that parents had been provided with a copy of the Healthy Eating policy.
- During discussion, the registered provider advised that if a child expressed that they were hungry outside of the allocated mealtime, they were free to retrieve a snack from their lunch box.
- The inspector was informed that none of the children who attended the service had specific dietary requirements or allergies.

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 gate that provided access to the service was secured when not in use, which reduced the likelihood of a child exiting, while unsupervised.
- The door to the staff sanitary facility was maintained secure, with the key stored out of the children's reach.
- Visibility markings were provided on the low-level glass panel doors in the care room, which minimised the risk of a collision injury.
- A television in the care room was safely wall mounted above child height and the attached cables were also inaccessible to the children.
- Two of the three wash hand basins allocated for the children's use were supplied with thermostatically controlled warm water. The water temperature at the wash hand basin in the main care room was recorded at 26.8°C and a reading of 36.1°C was taken at the wash hand basin in the first of the two children's sanitary facilities.
- Firefighting equipment was securely wall mounted.
- Safety plugs were installed in low-lying electrical sockets.

Infection Control:

- The wash hand basins were stocked with liquid soap and disposable paper towels, which supported effective handwashing.
- The children were observed to wash their hands after using the toilet facilities and before sitting down to begin their mid-morning snack. One of the children was also reminded to wash their hands after sneezing.
- A refrigerator was used to store the children's perishable snacks, prior to consumption.

Administration of Medication:

- The registered provider confirmed that none of the children were in receipt of medication.

Safe Sleep:

- No child was observed to sleep during the inspection period.

Fire Safety:

- There were no fire safety concerns noted.

Outings:

- Not applicable. It was reported that outings were not conducted as part of the programme of activities.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The water temperature at one of the children’s wash hand basins exceeded 43⁰C, which increased the risk of scalding. A temperature reading of 46⁰C was recorded in the second children’s sanitary facility. This issue was found at a different children’s wash hand basin during the previous inspection, on 6 September 2021. In the CAPA response at the time, it was stated that the hot water temperature had been reduced and that the water would be checked daily, prior to the children’s arrival. However, this was not found in practice.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

In her written response, the registered provider stated that a thermometer is in place in the setting and that the water temperature at all sinks will be checked daily. All of the sinks are served with hot water from the same water tank and a plumber is investigating the issue.

Supporting documentation submitted

The statement from the registered provider is accepted as evidence.

Summary Comment

Based on the statement from the registered provider, regulatory compliance is determined to have 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) One of the adults had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The relevant certification was available and was valid until 12 June 2024.

(2)

(a) Two first aid boxes were stored on a high shelf in the care room.

(b) The first aid boxes were accessible to the adults throughout the hours of operation.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(a)(b)

A sufficient supply of first aid materials was not maintained. The two available sterile eye pad dressings were out of date, only three large sterile wound dressings were available, where six were required and there were no medium or extra large wound dressings provided.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The response provided advised that the first aid box has been restocked. The missing wound dressings had been removed from the first aid box, due to being out of date. Staff will allow more time for items to be replaced, as expiry dates approach, as the items were not available locally on the previous day.

Supporting documentation submitted

A photograph of the first aid supplies was forwarded.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under this regulation has been addressed.

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)
- (b) The certificate of servicing for the firefighting equipment indicated that this was carried out on 13 September 2023. The certification of testing for the fire alarm was dated November 2023.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedure was displayed on the notice board, beside the main entrance/exit door.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Clear and comprehensive fire drill records were unavailable. The record presented was entitled *Fire Safety Training* and consisted of staff names and dates. The registered provider advised that this was the record used to document fire drills. However, it did not include details in relation to the numbers of staff and children present at the time of said fire drills, or the duration of the fire drills. It was also noted that the records did not reflect the undertaking of monthly fire drills, as required. For example, the dates documented were 10/23, 4/9/2023, 8/4/2023 and 15/1/2023. This was at variance with the service's Fire Safety policy, which stated that *Fire drills will be carried out monthly*.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In her written response, the registered provider outlined that the form mentioned will no longer be used and that the following headings for the fire drill will be included: date of drill, time of drill, number of children/staff/parents/other persons, duration of drill, escape routes used, actions arising from the drill, actions taken and signature. The response also stated that monthly fire drills are carried out and were noted for this school year, however, the day was omitted from 10/23, due to human error. In addition, it stated that staff will endeavour to increase the time given to paperwork after each session.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the updated fire drill record.

Summary Comment

The corrective action implemented by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under regulation 26.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A record of insurance for the early years sessional service was available, with an expiration date of 27 March 2024. The cover outlined that up to 22 children could attend at any one time.

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,*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) From a visual assessment, the premises appeared to be of sound and stable structure.
- (e) Two toilets and two wash hand basins were in place adjoining the care room, for the children's use. A separate toilet facility, which comprised one toilet and one wash hand basin was provided for staff.

Non-Compliance Information

- (e) A tap at one of the children's wash hand basins was not maintained in proper working order and required repair. The base of the tap was loose and moveable and it was difficult to properly open and close the tap.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider's written response stated that the taps have been changed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was forwarded.

Summary Comment

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