

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC278
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Name of Service:	Mulberry Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Cois Caireal, Mulberry, Mitchelstown, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P67 V045
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mella (Majella) Finn
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue
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

Mulberry Montessori Pre-school is a private early years sessional service in operation since 2004, providing care and education for children aged from 2 to 6 years. The service is open from 8.30am to 3.30pm, Monday to Friday. There are two sessions available, one in the morning from 9.00am until 12.00pm and one in the afternoon from 12.30pm until 3.30pm, both facilitating the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year.

Mulberry Montessori Pre-school is located in a residential area on the perimeter of the urban town of Mitchelstown in north Cork. It operates from a purpose-built extension of the registered provider's home which has an interconnecting door to the main residence. The service has its own entrance and there is one large care room with direct access to the rear outdoor play area, two children's toilets located at the service entrance and one adult toilet and office located at the adjoining door to the registered provider's home.

Staffing

There were eight adults attached to the service, including the registered provider, five early years educators and two students on placement.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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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 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,*

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- (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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 service had a designated person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection.
- (b) From review of the roster a person in charge or deputy person in charge was on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
- (c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included the person in charge, deputy person in charge and early years educators.

(2) There were eight adults attached to the service; all eight adults files were open to inspection.

- (a) Of the 16 references required, 10 validated references were available from past employers.
- (b) Of the 16 references required, 6 validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures has been obtained for all the eight adults with direct access to children. 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 deemed to be required for two of the eight adults working in the service and copies of the relevant documents were maintained on file for the two adults.

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(3) The registered provider carried out the procedures specified above prior to the adults being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with the children in the service.

(4) All six adults working directly with children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at least at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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

A review of the following policies was conducted and all required information was available.

- Healthy eating policy.
- Infection control policy.
- Managing behaviour policy.
- Administration of medication policy.

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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(3) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratios were in adherence to the requirements of the regulation.

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- In the Preschool room in the morning, there were 5 staff working with 18 children aged between 2 years and 10 months and 5 years and 2 months, all were attending sessional care. In addition, there was two students present in the room.
- In the afternoon session, there were 5 staff working with 17 children aged between 3 years and 2 months and 5 years and 2 months, all were attending sessional care. In addition, there was two students present in the room.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) Forty-one children were registered to attend the service. A copy of all 41 enrolment records were available on the day of inspection. A review of 10 records was conducted. All 10 records inspected had the detail required as listed from (a) to (i).

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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

Basic needs:

- Staff supported children with toileting. Staff encouraged independence and provided support as required.
- Children had access to soft tissues to clean their noses themselves.
- Children had access to their water bottles throughout the day.
- Staff provided support to children that needed help when eating and children were encouraged to be self-sufficient.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff spoke with children at their level, in a calm and relaxed tone. Children were at ease with staff and were comfortable in expressing their feelings and emotions to the staff members.
- Children engaged in parallel play and were observed to check in on their friends and include them in play.
- Staff were asking children if they wanted to participate in cleaning up, children were supportive with cleaning up after free play.
- During mealtimes staff sat at the table and engaged in social conversations with the children.
- Staff explained that the activities are child led, and children voice their interests and staff support their knowledge and learning through songs, activities, games and crafts.

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

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The snacks and meals were provided by parents/guardians of children attending the service. Perishable foods were stored in refrigerators around the service. Snacks and meals were served at appropriate times throughout the day. Additional snacks were available for children in the event they were required.

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 internal and external doors of the service were secured and prevented children from exiting the premises and unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- Toys and equipment assessed appeared in good condition and well maintained.
- All emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction.
- Blind cords were secured and out of reach of children.

Infection control:

- All perishable foods were stored in the refrigerator.
- Appropriate water temperatures were recorded in the care room and sanitary facility. The water temperature ranged from 20.5°C to 36.0°C.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables and chairs between activities and prior to mealtimes.
- Foot operated bins were available in the room and sanitary facilities.
- Regular handwashing was conducted throughout the day. This was observed when staff and children entered the premises, after cleaning noses, after toileting and before snack.
- Windows were open for natural air ventilation.

Administration of medication:

- No administration of medication was observed on the day of inspection. Discussion with staff ensured staff were aware of the correct process for administering medication in the event it was required.
- All medication observed on the day was in date and out of reach of children.

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Fire safety:

- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and clearly identified in the room.
- Fire equipment was available in the room in the event they were needed.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

1. The nappy changing mat observed in the children's sanitary facility was torn. This posed a risk of cross infection to the child.
2. The nappy changing mat was observed to be stored on the children's toilet in the sanitary facility. Not ensuring safe and hygienic storage of the nappy changing mat posed a risk of cross infection to the child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

1. The registered provider purchased a new nappy changing mat. The changing mat was added by the service to the daily cleaning checklist to prevent any tears from reoccurring.
2. The nappy changing mat is now stored on the high shelf in the children's sanitary area. The registered provider sent a reminder to all staff of the location of the nappy changing mat.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

1. Photographic evidence of the new changing mat and checklist was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. Photographic evidence was sent to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a member of staff with First Aid Response (FAR) training was available to the children at all times.