

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:	22/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	134 Bank Place, Mallow, Cork. P51 EC59
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Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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 of age. There are two sessions available, one in the morning from 9.00 am until 12.00 and one in the afternoon from 12.30 pm until 3.30 pm, 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 are six staff members, including three AIM Support Workers and the registered provider, working directly with the children. In addition, one student was 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 and safety. The inspections 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, 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*
- (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.

(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 designated person in charge on the day of inspection and a named person was available to deputise, if required.
- (b) The staff roster indicated that the designated person was available throughout the week and on the day of inspection while the pre-school children were present in the service, as was observed on the day of inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place and each staff member was aware of their role and responsibilities.

(2) Recruitment records in relation to the six staff members and the student were reviewed.

- (a) (b) There were seven validated references from previous employers and seven validated references from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were on file for each staff member and the student on placement.
- (d) An international vetting disclosure was available for one of two adults, for whom it was required, who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

(4) There was evidence that the six adults working directly with the children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. The student on placement did not require a childcare qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(d) An international police vetting disclosure was not on file for one adult who had lived outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)

(d) International Police vetting has been applied for and the staff member will not be working directly with the children while awaiting the disclosure. In future all vetting will be in place prior to the employee commencing employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(d) An email was received in the office of the inspectorate confirming conformation of application for International Police Vetting.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under this Regulation has been met. The International Police Vetting will be viewed on the next inspection.

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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in both the morning and afternoon sessions.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times. There were five staff members including two AIM Support Workers working directly with the children in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The student was also in attendance in both sessions.

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.

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of eleven records of the pre-school children attending the service were reviewed. The following-
sections were found to be compliant (a,b,c,d,e,i).

(3) (c) The records of all the pre-school children were open to inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(f) One child was missing an individual medical plan for a chronic illness.

(g) One child's pre-school record was missing General Practitioner's details.

(h) One child's pre-school record was missing a record of immunisations.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that in the future all forms will be checked for missing details.

(1)

(f) The child's medical plan was submitted by the parent and is now attached to the child's Pre-school Record.

(g) The G.P. details for the child have been added to the Pre-school Record of the child.

(h) A letter confirming the child's immunisation has been added to the Pre-school record of the child.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documentation was received in the office of the inspectorate:

(f) A copy of the child's individual medical plan.

(g) A copy of the General Practitioner's contact details.

(h) A copy of a letter signed by the parent confirming the child's current immunisation status.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under Regulation 15 have been met.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge, employees and student was available from the staff recruitment files.
 - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide was available on the Tusla certificate which was displayed at the service entrance.
 - (c)-(f) Adults child ratios, type of care programme, facilities available, opening hours and fees were available from the parent handbook.

- (g) The policies, procedures and statements required under Regulation 10 were available in the service's policies and procedures manual.
- (h) Details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis was available from the attendance book furnished to the inspector.
- (i) Staff rosters were recorded and up to date.
- (j) Ten records detailing any accidents and injuries were available and dated from 23 March 2023 to 5 July 2023.
- (k) The last administration of medication form had been signed on 19 December 2022. The registered provider stated that no child had any medication administered since this date.
- (3) The above records in relation to the pre-school service were open to inspection in the service.

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:

- Food was provided by the parent's/guardians in line with the service's healthy eating policy. Examples of food observed being eaten included filled sandwiches, cut sausages, smoothies, and various fruits cut into bite sized pieces.
- Children were observed independently dressing themselves to go outdoors, adults were available to assist where required.
- Individual inclusion plans were implemented in line with children's individual needs. A staff member used resources with one child including a manual sign system and visual aids to communicate with the child and with a second child used sensory materials to calm a child during circle time.
- Children were able to move freely around the care room and all children had the opportunity to play outdoors.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- A keyworker system was in operation and staff stated that they are responsible for carrying out observations on their key children in their Montessori workbooks, which were furnished to the inspector. These included topics such as practical life, sensorial, mathematics and language. These observations are shared and discussed with parents helping to build a reciprocal relationship with them.
- Staff members working with the children were responsive and encouraging in promoting positive behaviours and supported the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge during play. For example, a staff member role modelled an appropriate response to a child who did not want to play with another child.
- Emotional well-being and emotional literacy were evident at circle time with staff discussing emotions including being happy with the children. The children were shown a happy face and the staff member went around to each child with a mirror and each child got the opportunity to see themselves.
- Staff stated various methods of communicating with parents/guardians are used such as a group messaging system, phone, email, and face to face conversation at drop off and collection. A software application was available for communicating with parents/guardians but was not yet in use.
- In conversation staff stated that staff meetings, with the registered provider, take place every term and as required.
- **PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:**
- The indoor care room was laid out to provide a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse and creative experiences in clearly defined areas.
- The layout of the tables and chairs facilitated staff to supervise the children as they moved to different areas.
- Equipment and resources were stored on low-level shelving and were easily accessible to the children.
- The walls were brightly decorated. Photographs of the children were placed on birthday crayons with each child's month of birth and artwork including yellow triangles and children's hand drawn pictures were placed around the room.
- The outdoor area provided an alternative environment for the children in all weathers, with both covered and open areas available. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment including tractors, balance bicycles and ride-ons provided opportunities for enhancing gross physical play while puzzles, shape sorters and construction materials offered meaningful materials to engage in cognitive development.

There were three picnic benches providing seating for children who wanted to rest, and safety matting was located under the slide reducing the risk of falls or injuries.

- **PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:**

- Staff stated that curriculum planning was centred around the emergent interests of the children. Weekly planning was furnished to the inspector and included themes of fire safety and autumn. Each week there is a different colour, shape and emotion.
- Children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting activities. This was demonstrated when two children were observed staying indoors to draw while the rest of the children went outdoors to play.
- Children’s language and development were supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling in both Irish and English particularly at circle time. The children were heard singing “If you are happy and you know it clap your hands” and guessing the colour in Irish.

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 to the service was located at the side of the building and was secured upon arrival, preventing unauthorised adults gaining entry. An electronic switch, situated above the child’s height, was located on the inside of the door preventing children from leaving the service unsupervised.
- Windows were key operated preventing children from falling or exiting from them.
- Blind cords were tied up out of reach of the children.
- Toys and play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, were developmentally appropriate for the age and stage of the children using them and were in good condition.
- All heavy equipment and furniture were secured to prevent them falling or tipping on a child.
- Radio flexes were placed out of reach of the children.
- Indoor waste bins were inaccessible to the children and the four outdoor bins were located behind a wooden fence in the outdoor area.

- Cleaning agents, mops and buckets were stored in a locked cupboard.
- The outdoor play perimeter was secured with both metal fencing and wooden fencing.

Infection Control:

- Children who lined up at the toilets to wash their hands before snack had access to thermostatically controlled hot water (37.4°C), dispensing soap, paper towels in a dispenser, and a pedal operated bin for the disposal of waste.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the service's fridge, preventing spoilage.
- Each child had an individual laminated place mat which had their photograph on in which they could use to place their snack, preventing cross infection.
- In addition to staff sanitising the tables before and after snack time, when the children went outdoors to play a staff member swept the floor and mopped the toilet floor, preventing dirt and grime from building up.
- Children's coats and belongings were stored off the ground, on individual hooks.
- All cleaning schedules were complete and up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was stored in its original container and placed above the sink, out of reach of the children.

Safe Sleep:

- A rest/quiet area with soft furnishings was available for the children to rest located away from noisy activities.

Fire Safety:

- All emergency fire exit/fire doors were unobstructed.
- The fire assembly sign was visible in the outdoor play area, a suitable distance from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- (1) The sand cover in the outdoor sandbox was ripped and did not provide adequate cover to prevent toxic or harmful materials from being deposited in it.
- (2) The faux red cushion cover on one of the three cushions in the rest/quiet area was ripped making it difficult to clean.
- (3) The table in the covered outdoor area had paint flaking from it making it difficult to keep clean.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that in the future all damaged items will be replaced.

Infection Control:

- (1) The sand cover has been replaced on the outdoor sandbox with a new one.
- (2) A new cushion cover was bought to replace the ripped one in the rest/quiet area.
- (3) The table in the outdoor play area has been sanded and painted to facilitate cleaning.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographs were received in the office of the inspectorate.

- (1) The new sand cover.
- (2) The new cushion cover on a cushion in the rest/quiet area.
- (3) The re-sanded and newly painted table in the outdoor play area.

Summary Comment

The non-compliances identified under this Regulation have been addressed.

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) Certificates were on file to verify that the registered provider and two additional staff members had up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed, and an additional two staff had completed paediatric first aid training. The registered provider was available at all times while the pre-school children were in the service.

(2)

(a) (b) The first aid box was stored above the adult sink in the care room, easily accessible to the staff and was available at all times.

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) A written record was available of the fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 22 September 2023.
 - (b) Written records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and testing of smoke alarms in the service. These were both dated 30 August 2023.
- (2)
- (c) The records were open to inspection by the inspector on the day.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located at the main entrance to the service on the wall.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A certificate was available to evidence that the registered provider had insurance for the service. The expiry date was noted as 27 November 2023 and the details included the number of children in each session, which was twenty-two, and the type of service, which was sessional.