

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC302
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Name of Service:	Nathleen's Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Percival St, Kanturk, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P51 Y91R
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nathleen Kelleher O'Doherty
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	13/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	11
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork
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Inspection undertaken by:	S O'Brien
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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

Nathleen's Montessori School is a privately owned part-time service operating in Kanturk since 1994.

The service is situated in the town of Kanturk and has children attending from the surrounding areas. The service is run by the registered provider.

The service provides a part-time and sessional service from Monday to Friday for children aged from 2 to 6 years. The part-time service operates daily from 9am-2pm and the sessional services operate from 9am-12pm or from 12:15pm – 3:15pm daily.

The service also offers a registered school aged care service from 1:50pm – 6pm daily.

The service operates from a single-story premises accessed via an alley. The premises consists of a small entrance lobby which opens into Room A, which is used for the sessional, part time and school aged care services. Room B an inner room is used for a morning and an afternoon sessional service for the younger children and is accessed through Room A.

There are adult and children's toilet facilities, and a kitchen used for staff breaks and for the reheating of the children's food.

The service does not have a designated outdoor area but has access to the local park for outdoor play.

Staffing

There are seven staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. On the day of inspection, three adults worked directly with the preschool children. Two staff members were supernumerary when working with the preschool children and one staff member carrying out administration duties were also 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 and safety. 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, 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.

(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 and a named deputy in the service. The registered provider was the person in charge on the day of inspection.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and deputy person in charge were on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in the service and all staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2)
- Seven staff members are employed in the service and all seven files were assessed.
- (a) Five of the fourteen references were available from a past employer and were validated.

- (b) Nine of the fourteen references were available from a reputable source and were validated.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all seven staff from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána and adhered to the Regulatory Notice on the renewing of Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting disclosures were available for two staff members who had lived outside a state for longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) Three staff members held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from level 5 to level 7 on the national qualifications framework or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent. Two staff members non-qualified who worked directly with the children, were supervised at all times. One staff member who carried out administration duties held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 following policies were reviewed:

- Complaints policy.
- Inclusion policy.
- Accidents and Incidents policy.
- Healthy Eating policy.

The policies contained the information required to guide staff their care practices for children.

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.

(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) There were adequate staff available to care for the preschool children in attendance in the service.

(2) On arrival, there were fourteen preschool children aged between three and four being cared for by five adults. In the afternoon, there were eleven preschool children being cared for by five staff.

The roster indicated the staff working in the care room and there was sufficient staff available for break cover, therefore ensuring minimum adult to child ratios were being adhered to at all times.

(8) The staff roster was reviewed and indicated that two staff members were on the premises at all times while the service was operating.

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) A sample of twelve children records were accessed and all forms were completed and contained the information outlined from (a) to (i).

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.*

Compliance Information

The following records were reviewed on inspection:

- (h) The attendance records of the preschool children were available and reviewed.
- (i) A staff roster was available and was reviewed.
- (k) A sample of six accident and incident records for children who attend the service were reviewed and completed, containing all relevant information in relation to any accident or incident that had occurred.

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

- Children were supported during toileting in a kind and respectful manner. Nappy changing was not observed. A nappy changing area was available in the service if required.
- Children were observed handwashing before mealtimes and after outdoor play.
- Individual care plans were available for the children who required them. The staff were aware of the specific needs of each child and ensured their care needs were being met. Activities outlined in their care plans were available to the children to support their development such as sensory play.
- The children were observed freely moving around the room participating in different activities of their choice.
- Children were observed displaying signs of tiredness and the staff made stackable beds available to the children with blankets for the children to rest comfortably.
- Snacks and meals were available to the children at appropriate times throughout the day. Plates and placemats were available to the children to use.

Supporting Relationships

- Staff were observed sitting and chatting to the children at mealtimes making it a relaxed environment for the children to enjoy their food.
- Staff were aware of the individual needs of each child and supported children during transition times.
- Staff spoke to the parents and guardians on drop off and collection times. An electronic app was used as an additional pathway of communication between the service and the parents and guardians.
- Staff spoke to the children in a respectful manner and ensured they were at the child's level when communicating with them while using gentle voices.

Programme of Activities

- During circle time, the children sang songs based on the theme of the week.
- Children took part in role play activities in the dress up and home corner.
- The children were observed playing with sensory materials such as playdough which the children made as part of a group activity.
- Physical movement was supported through dancing and going for a walk in the local park.
- The activities observed were based on the interests of the children and the children's voices were listened to if they wanted to partake in a different activity. This was observed at several points during the day and showed the children that their opinion was valued.

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 and snacks were provided by the parents and guardians of the children. At 10.25am, the children were observed eating yoghurts, fruits, cheeses and meat sandwiches. The main meal of the day was served to the children at 12:45pm which included pasta, rice, vegetables, noodles, chicken, ham sandwiches. The service also supplied additional foods and snacks etc at both mealtimes such as vegetable soup, crackers and fruits.
- The service provided evidence of the information they provided parents and guardians throughout the year in relation to healthy eating and good food choices for children. The service continues to support the parents and guardians on healthy food choices which is in line with the services healthy eating policy.

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:

- External doors to the service were appropriately secured and ensured children could not exit unsupervised or prevented any unauthorised entry to the service.
- Internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas in the service.
- Emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Window openings were out of reach to children.
- Toys and play equipment assessed were suitable and safe for the age of the children in the service and were in good condition and free from pinch and crush points.
- Heavy furniture assessed were fully anchored and prevented injury to children.
- Flexes and cables assessed were in good condition and out of reach to the children.
- Lidded bins were available for waste disposal.

Infection Control:

- Warm water was available in the sanitary hand basins for handwashing and the water temperature recorded was 36.2°C.
- Staff were observed cleaning the tables in the care room before mealtimes using antibacterial cleaning products.
- Paper towel, soap and lidded bins were available in the sanitary area.
- Children's lunches were stored in a refrigerator to prevent perishable foods from spoiling.
- Staff were observed wearing aprons and gloves during food preparation.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff were not observed administering medication on the day of inspection
- The staff discussed specific care plans for children who required emergency medication and staff were aware of the location of the emergency medication and the procedure to follow in the event of the medication needing to be administered.
- The medication was in date and was clearly labelled and stored out of reach of children in the care room.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were not observed sleeping on the day of inspection. Stackable beds were available and were suitable for the age range of the children in the service and was in line with the safe sleep guidance document.

Outing:

- The service uses the local park for outdoor play. The children and staff were observed wearing hi visibility jackets for the outing.
- Staff ensured that children were safe at all times especially while crossing the road.
- Risk assessments were carried out on a regular basis and were available for each outing that took place.

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

Compliance Information

(1) Fire drill records were available for review from the beginning of the school year and were completed on a monthly basis.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
(a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
(b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
(c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
(b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The complaints policy was reviewed and outlined the procedure to be followed when making a complaint, the manner in which the complaint will be dealt with, and the procedures for keeping the complainant informed in the complaints process.

(2)(4)

The registered provider stated that the service had received no complaints in the last 4 years in relation to the preschool service.