

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC360				
Name of Service:	Serendipity Montessori & Childcare Facility				
Address of Service:	172 West End, Mallow, Co. Cork				
Eircode:	P51 NN62				
Name of Registered Provider:	Brigid Griffin				
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	09/09/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>18</td> <td>PM</td> <td>7</td> </tr> </table>	AM	18	PM	7
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow. Cork. P51 DD5Y				
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel				
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

Serendipity Montessori and Childcare Facility is a private early years care and education facility, in operation since 1995, registered for both sessional and part-time provision. The service is opened from 09:00 am until 15:00 pm facilitating the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme in the morning from 09:00 to 12:00 pm and in the afternoon from 12 noon to 3:00 pm, 38 weeks of the year. It is registered for children aged 1 year to 6 years of age and currently accommodates children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age. The service offers both play based and Montessori curricula.

Serendipity Montessori and Childcare Facility is located in the urban town of Mallow in North Cork. It operates from a two-storey converted house and consists of three care rooms namely Butterfly, Zebra/Hippo, Giraffe. It also has two dining rooms, a storage room, and adult and child sanitary areas. A secure outdoor play area is situated at the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are currently four staff members employed, who work directly with the children, including the registered provider.

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 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 and a named person was available to deputise.
- (b) The staff roster evidenced that the registered provider was present in the service while the early years children were present.
- (c) There was a clear management structure evident in the service and this was documented on the notice board in the reception area and on the door of the Giraffe care room.
- (2) Recruitment files for the four adults, working directly with the children, including the registered provider were reviewed;
- (a) (b) There were six validated references from previous employers and two validated references from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults working directly with the children. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Review of the staff files indicated that there was no overseas police vetting disclosures required as none of the adults resided outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer as adults.
- (4) There was evidence that the four 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.

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 an adequate number of staff working directly with the children in attendance.

(2) The minimum adult child ratios were met. There were three groups in operation in the morning and two groups in operation in the afternoon.

Butterfly Room (2 years – 3 years) There were two sessional children and one part-time child in attendance with two staff members in the morning and three children in attendance with one staff member in the afternoon.

Zebra /Hippo Room (3 years– 5 years) The children in this room in the morning sessional service are known as the Zebras and the afternoon sessional children are known as the Hippos. There were 6 sessional children and three part-time children with 1 staff member in the morning and four sessional children in attendance with one staff member in the afternoon.

Giraffe (3 years– 5 years) There were 6 sessional children in attendance with one staff member in the morning.

(8) (a) The roster confirmed that two staff were on the premises at all times. Both the registered provider and the deputy were on the premises during the inspection.

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:

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(f) Details of a child with an allergy, together with all the relevant information for the care of the child, was available in the service.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, deputy, and staff were observed to be kept in 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 were available on the Tusla Registration Certificate displayed on the stairwell of the service.
 - (c) The details of the adult child ratios were kept in the Parent Handbook.
 - (d) (e) (f) The type of care programme available along with the facilities available, opening hours and fees were available in the Parent Handbook.
 - (g) The services policies and procedures, required for Regulation 10, were kept in soft form in the service where parents/guardians could access them.
 - (h) The attendance records for each child were available in attendance sheets in each care room.
 - (i) The staff roster was furnished to the inspector on arrival which included staff working hours and breaks.
 - (j) The register provider stated that administration of medication forms were available, if required. As it was the beginning of term, the registered provider stated none had been completed to date.
 - (k) There was an Accident/Incident book available, the last date recorded was 14 December 2021. The registered provider stated that no accidents/incidents had happened in the intervening period.
- (3) The above records were open to inspection on the premises by the inspector.

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:

- Foods provided by parents/guardians observed on the day of inspection, served in dining room on the ground and upper floors, were healthy and nutritious in line with the service's healthy eating policy. Examples included a rolling snack available from 10.00 am which included ham and cheese sandwiches, yogurts, bite sized pieces of fruit and rice cakes. A hot lunch was available from 12.30 pm with examples including chicken nuggets, pesto pasta, rice, and vegetables.
- Alternative food was available in a cupboard in the ground floor dining room in the event a child did not like their food or was hungry.
- Water was accessible, from individually labelled water bottles, at all times, in both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Cutlery and crockery were available for all children. Personalised laminated placemats, with photographs of the children and their artwork, were observed on the table of the Giraffe dining room and were in use on the day.
- Children were observed accessing the sanitary area on the upper floor with staff nearby to provide assistance, if required. A changing table was available in the downstairs sanitary area, this was not observed in use on the day.
- Rest/quiet areas were visible in all three care rooms and were noted to consist of large washable bean bags, vinyl circular mats and rugs on the floor. Two stackable beds were observed in the upstairs store room for children should they require a rest/ sleep in the service in line with the service's sleep policy which stated that "children needing a sleep have access to a low-level bed".
- Individual waterproofs, all in ones, were available in each care room for messy play outdoors.
- The weather on the day on inspection was warm and staff were observed applying sun cream; protecting children's skin from the sun.

- Children had room to move and explore in the care rooms and in the outdoor play areas and all children were observed playing outdoors throughout the day.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- The staff member in the Giraffe care room was observed sitting at the dining room table with the children engaging in social conversation, the atmosphere was noted to be happy and relaxed.
- Children in the outdoor area were encouraged to engage positively with one another with staff reminding children to be aware of the children around them while cycling and running in the area.
- Staff stated a keyworker was in operation and that they work in partnership with parents to ensure the best outcomes for the children.
- Various methods of communication were stated by staff to send and receive information from parents/guardians, including phone calls, emails, texts, a social media application and at drop off and collection.

PHYSICAL MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Having regards to the age and stage of development of the children in the service, there were adequate materials and equipment available. The Zebra/Hippo room had a range of play-based materials and Montessori equipment that offered stimulation and exploration while children in the Giraffe room had access to resources which encouraged imaginary play including a doll's house, small world characters, dressing up trolley with various outfits and two wooden farms with wooden animals.
- Children were able to access the play materials and equipment from low level shelving which promoted independence and offered a variety of choice.
- Suitable age and stage appropriate tables and chairs were provided in each care room.
- A range of books were available in each care room which supported children's language and development.
- The outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children with an area designated for physical play and a separate area with a covered sand area for sensory play. A play house and mud kitchen offered opportunities for imaginary play and children were observed practicing their gross motor skills with opportunities for sliding, cycling and running available on the safety matting and concrete area.

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 was secured on arrival and the bell was answered by a staff member, ensuring that unauthorised adults could not enter the service. The inside of the door was secured with a thumb twist lock and a lever placed high on the door ensuring no child could leave the service unsupervised.
- Windows in the service were fitted with window restrictors ensuring the safety of the children in the service.
- A handrail, located at the children's height, was available on the stairs leading from the ground to the upper floor providing a secure grip thus enabling the children to walk the stairs safely.
- Toys and equipment were well maintained and in good condition in both the indoor and outdoor areas.
- All flexes and chords were secured out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored on high shelving, inaccessible by the children.
- A large area of the ground surface in the outdoor play area, under the slide and climbing frame, was covered in safety matting, helping to reduce the risk of injury should a child fall.
- The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured with high concrete walls. A high metal gate was in place and staff could identify parents/guardians arriving for collection of the children through the gate, ensuring no unauthorised adult could enter the area.

Infection Control:

- Sinks in use by the adults and children in the service were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water recorded at 43°C, within the recommended limit. Dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins, for the disposal of paper waste, were also available in each area.
- Disposable gloves and aprons were available in the downstairs sanitary area, if required. Nappy changing was not observed on the day.
- Windows in the service were open facilitating the circulation of fresh air and mechanical ventilation was available in the downstairs sanitary area.
- Perishable food was observed stored in the fridge on the ground floor, preventing the food from spoiling.
- Children's coats and bags were observed to be hung on individual hooks, away from the floor area.

- Completed cleaning rotas were available for the; communal, lunch and outdoor areas.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was available, if required. It was stored in a high cupboard in the ground floor dining room, out of reach of the children.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency fire doors were unobstructed.
- Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on the noticeboard in the reception area and on the back door of the Giraffe care room door.
- The fire assembly point sign was located on a wall in the outdoor play area, providing a visible safe place for the adults and children to stand in the event of an emergency.
- Fire extinguishers were anchored with metal brackets to the walls in the service.

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 available to evidence that one adult had First Aid Responder (FAR) training completed and one staff member had a certificate in paediatric first aid. The staff roster indicated that the adult with FAR train is available at all times while the early years children are present in the service.

(2) (a)(b) The suitably equipped first aid boxes, located in the dining room downstairs and in the Zebra/Hippos care room upstairs, were available at all times and were within reach of the adults in the rooms.

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.
- (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) Written records were available of the weekly fire drills which took place in the service. The date recorded of the most recent fire drill was 4 September 2024, with the previous drills dated 29 August 2024.
 - (b) Written records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm servicing. The firefighting equipment certificate was dated 26 August 2024, and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 18 March 2024.
- (2) (c) The above records were open to review by the inspector on the service on the day.
- (4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on the notice board in the Giraffe care room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentation was available to evidence that the registered provider had insurance for the service. The certificate evidenced that the service was insured for 24 children on a part-time basis and the expiry date was noted as 27 March 2025. Details included cover for public liability and fire and theft.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(d) The outside of the service had been newly painted, and the old light fittings had been removed from the ceilings of the service, since the last inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(e)

- (1) While there were adequate sanitary facilities for both adults and children, the downstairs sanitary area, where there were two toilets facing each other, were observed not have any doors separating the areas. This could potentially compromise the privacy of children; should two children require to use the facilities at the same time. In conversation, the registered provider stated that they are currently seeking a tradesperson in order to resolve the issue.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was made by the registered provider;

(e)

- (1) Custom made doors are being made due to the size of the area, when ready these will be fitted by the carpenter. Adults will supervise the toilets to ensure that only one child at a time is in the area until the doors have been installed.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) The statement by the registered provider has been accepted. An invoice was received from the carpenter confirming that the doors will be fitted when ready.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 (e) has been addressed.