

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE019
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Name of Service:	Castlerock Montessori
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Address of Service:	33 Castlerock, Tulla Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 CD78
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rita Clinton
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	8	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare.
Inspection undertaken by:	A. McCarthy
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Castlerock Montessori was established in 2009 as a private, sessional service in Ennis, County Clare. A Montessori play based programme of care and education is facilitated Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 12:00 for children ranging in age from two years and eight months to five years.

The service is located in a two-storey domestic dwelling with a section adapted for childcare. The programme of care and education is provided in one care room on the ground floor. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

On the 11 March 2026 the registered provider assisted by one adult cared for the children in attendance. The adults held an Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications at Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Records were available demonstrating the adult's engagement in continuing professional development.

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

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety, premises and facilities. The regulations inspected included:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (3)

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 26- Fire safety measures (1)(a)(b)(4)

Regulation 28- Insurance

Regulation 29 – Premises (e)

Regulation 30- Minimum space requirements (3)

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. 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.

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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.*

(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, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider and the deputy were available during the inspection.

(2)

Two files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adult working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

One written and validated reference was available from a past employer.

(b)

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Three written and validated references were obtained from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the adults currently working in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required in respect of the adults working in the service as the adults had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.

(4)

The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications at Level 7 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.

(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)

During the inspection, an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.

(3)

On the 11 March 2026 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Two adults cared for the eight children attending the service.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials, and equipment having regard to the age and developmental stage of the children.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

The adults interacted with the children in a kind and respectful manner. The adults listened attentively and conversed with the children at their level and responded promptly to their cues for assistance. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions, and the children were offered praise and encouragement. The adults demonstrated an awareness of the children's personal interests and capabilities. The adults supported the children in individual and group play based activities throughout the session and engaged in open ended discussions.

The children were encouraged to be independent while caring for their belongings, their play materials and equipment, at mealtime and whilst using the toilet. The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their age and level of development. The Montessori based programme of care and education was child focused and the children were notified in advance of transitions in activities. The children and adults discussed their visit to the local garda station and the local fire service. Photographs displayed on the wall captured the children's engagement with the local community services. An open-door policy for parents/guardians was in place for the service. An informal communication approach was observed during interactions with parents/guardians. The adults discuss the children's day and observations with the parent/guardians during drop off and collection times.

Physical and Material Environment:

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The programme of care and education was facilitated in one open plan care room and in the outdoor play area. The children engaged in open ended tabletop and floor-based Montessori based activities in the indoor environment. The care room was bright and was adequately resourced for the age range and stage of development of the children. Designated areas of interest were accessible and were appropriately equipped with supporting materials and equipment for the children. The defined interest areas included a home corner, a dress up area, a rest and reading area, low level shelving units were equipped with a large quantity of imaginative, constructive and manipulative Montessori based equipment and materials. The walls were illustrated with children's artwork, children's handprints, learning activities for the week, geographical, numerical and literacy learning aids.

The area to the rear of the service offered a space for the children to engage in outdoor play-based activities. The outdoor play area was enclosed by a wall and gate. The children have access to a wooden activity unit with a tree house, a slide and climbing frames. The outdoor equipment is stored in a box that can be accessed by the children when required.

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.*
- (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 record of completed monthly fire drills was available. A fire drill took place on the 11 March 2026.

(b)

Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system maintenance service took place on the 12 November 2025.

(4)

Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed at both entry/exit points in the building.

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Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for twenty-two pre-school children attending on a sessional basis. The policy is valid until 27 November 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

(e)
The children had access to sanitary facilities adjacent to the pre-school room. The sanitary facility was appropriately equipped with a child sized toilet and a wash hand basin. A sanitary facility is also available for use by the adults.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(3)
Adequate clear floor space is provided for the eleven pre-school children enrolled to attend the service on a sessional basis. The care room measured 25.44 m².