

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015CE098

Name of Service: Mary K's Childcare Pre- School and Montessori

Address of Service: Deerpark, Doora, Ennis, Co. Clare

Eircode: V95 N1K7

Name of Registered Provider: Mary Kennedy

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 15/11/2023

No of pre-school children:	AM	40	PM	37

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Quality and Regulation Directorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Ennis Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare V95TY4E
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

Description of service

Mary K's Childcare Pre- School and Montessori was established in 2009, as a privately operated, full day care service. The service is located in a rural area, close to Doora National School in County Clare. The service operates Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 17:00 accommodating children ranging in age from six months to six years. The children's care and learning is facilitated in a purpose-built building consisting of five care rooms, a sleep room and a kitchen. During the inspection the rooms in operation included the Baby room (age range: six months-one year), the Wobbler room (age range: one-two years), the Toddler room (age range: two-three years), the Junior Preschool room (age range: three-four years) and the Cabin (age range: two to three years). An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the building.

Staffing

On the 15th of November 2023 the registered provider, nine members of staff and two students were present. The staff held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The files demonstrated the staff members engagement in continuous 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

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. 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, 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

(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 staff member was available to deputise as required.

(b)

Both the registered provider and the person who is assigned as deputy were available throughout the inspection.

Twelve files were available and reviewed. The findings included the following:

(2)(a)

Twenty-one written and verified references were available from past employers.

- (b)
Three written and validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c)
Garda Vetting disclosures were available and reviewed in respect of all the adults working in the service.
- (d)
International police vetting was available in respect of five adults who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months as an adult.
- (4)
The adults employed by the service held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 9 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)
On the 15th of November 2023 an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service.
- (2)

During the inspection the ratio of adults supervising the children was maintained. The registered provider and nine adults cared for forty children in the morning and thirty-seven children in the afternoon.

(8)(a)

The staff roster demonstrated that more than two adults were available in the service at all times.

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)-(i)

Fifty-one children forms were available for the number of children registered in the service. The forms included the particulars outlined from (a) to (i).

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

(1)(a)

Basic Needs of Children:

The inspector observed the children's learning, development, and well-being to be supported by the members of staff. The staff treated the children with positive regard this was observed by the staff listening to and conversing with the children at their level and responding promptly to their cues for assistance or comfort. The children were offered continuous praise and encouragement and the staff used positive behavioural strategies during interactions. The staff demonstrated a good knowledge of the children's individual capabilities, interests, and personal preferences. The children were consulted in relation to planning activities, curriculum. The themes and curriculum plans were displayed on noticeboards in each room. The staff communicated informally with parents when the children were dropped off and collected from the service. The children's daily observations were shared with their parents electronically through the service's application system. Individual learning Journals demonstrated the children's activities and achievement throughout their journey in the service.

Staff held and comforted the babies when they required attention. Babies were encouraged to crawl, roll and develop their speech skills by staff through conversations, rhymes and song. The children's nappies were changed on an individual needs basis and the staff carried out these procedures in a sensitive manner. The staff supported the older children to be independent while caring for their belongings, their play materials and toileting needs. The children's sleep needs were responded to appropriately on an individual needs basis and children who did not wish to sleep were provided with alternative activities. Areas were provided for the children with soft furnishings and reading materials and were used by the children periodically to rest and relax.

Physical and Material Environment:

The children played freely in the indoor and outdoor areas. The five care rooms and the adjacent outdoor areas were appropriately resourced for the age range and stage of development of the children. The baby, wobbler and

toddler rooms provided a space with a range of soft surfaces, play activities, and equipment that was accessible to the children. The babies freely accessed various toys and equipment and the relaxation areas. The babies were supported individually and as part of the group activities.

The children attending the pre-school rooms engaged in a range of play and learning activities. All the staff communicated effectively with each other whilst facilitating the programme and supported each child in their chosen activities. The children engaged freely in extended play and moved from the indoor and outdoor area and were observed to engage in gross motor physical activities, sensory activities using the mud kitchen, soft play activities and language development activities that included rhymes, singing and storytelling. Equipment and play materials were accessed freely by the children. Staff engaged in open ended discussions and singing exercises, played games with the children and sat with the children as they engaged in manipulative and sensory play.

The outdoor environment offered a space for the children to freely move and engage in a range of sensory, creative, physical, pretend and constructive play. Designated areas included a glasshouse which accommodated the children's plants, a hill for climbing and rolling, balance beams, a slide, a climbing frame, tricycles, mud kitchens and seating. During the inspection the children played in the outdoor area, the children planted garlic and built a pretend campfire together. The outdoor area was divided into two enclosed sections. The toddler area had a matted surface and the pre-school children's section has a grass surface and covered section. The outdoor space is secured by a high fence, concrete wall and a gate. Protective weatherproof clothing and footwear were available for use by the children.

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 secured appropriately to prevent unauthorised persons from entering or unsupervised children exiting the building. A bell operated system was in place to gain entry to the service.
- The outdoor area was secured with a surrounding fence, wall and gate to protect the children within.
- The children’s arrival and departure times were recorded on the service’s electronic device.
- Looped cord blinds were appropriately secured throughout the service.
- Cleaning agents were inaccessible to the children and stored in safe locations throughout the service.
- The registered provider had records of completed risk assessments demonstrating measures taken to minimise risks within the service.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean condition. Cleaning schedules were available to demonstrate the frequency and measures taken by the staff to maintain the service.
- Running hot water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lined, lidded pedal operated bins were available.
- The children washed their hands at regular intervals during the day.
- Perishable food items and prepared infant formula were stored in the fridge.

Administration of Medication:

- The registered provider confirmed that medication was not administered during the inspection. Documentation is available should prescription or non-prescription medication be required. Individualised care plans are available for some children and the staff had attended training to gain the knowledge and skills to administer medication.

Safe Sleep:

- The registered provider and staff demonstrated a good knowledge of the service’s safe sleep policy.
- Children were placed to sleep in their individual standard cots and low-level beds.
- A thermometer was available in the sleep room for staff to measure and monitor the room temperature.
- The members of staff recorded the sleeping children’s observations every ten minutes during sleep periods

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit routes and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exits and fire assembly points were clearly identified with signage.
- The staff demonstrated a good knowledge of conducting fire drills and monthly records of completed fire drill practices were available for review by the inspector.

Outing:

- The registered provider confirmed that outings were not undertaken by 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)

The registered provider and the members of staff had a record of up to date First Aid Response training.

(2)(a)

Three suitably equipped and accessible first aid boxes were stored in the service.

(b)

The first aid boxes were available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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)

Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 13th of October 2023.

(b)

A record of the number, type and maintenance for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system were available. The most recent firefighting equipment and smoke alarm maintenance service took place on the 9th of November 2023.

(4)

Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the service.

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 fifty-five children on a full day care basis. The policy is valid until the 28th of March 2024.