

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW013		
Name of Service:	Clareville Montessori School		
Address of Service:	Tullow Road, Carlow, Co. Carlow		
Eircode:	R93 WA27		
Name of Registered Provider:	Ashling Nolan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	21/01/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla child and Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow		
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton		
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

Clareville Montessori is a registered sessional Early Childhood Care and Education service which offers a Montessori and play based pedagogy since 2005. The service operates from a purpose-built extension at the back of the registered provider's private residence and consists of three Montessori classrooms, an interest area, adjacent children's toilets and a spacious enclosed natural outdoor area at the back of the premises.

A large car park is also provided for parents to safely drop and collect their children to the service, directly located in front of the main entrance to the service.

Staffing

There are five staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. All five staff members held qualifications in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

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.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Montessori classrooms and interest area.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 15-Record of a Pre-school Child,

Regulation 19 -Health, Welfare and Development of Child,

Regulation 23-Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 24-Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance,

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, 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 named designated person in charge in the service and was present for the duration of the inspection. There was a named deputy designated person available to deputise as required.

(b) The staff roster demonstrated that the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation.

(2) Staff files for five staff members, including the registered provider were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the staff members from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff members including the registered provider.

However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate

Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23.

(d) Not applicable as there was no staff member employed in the service who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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 were five staff members working directly with the 29 children attending the service.

(3) In Montessori Classroom 1 - There were 2 staff members directly caring for and engaged in work with 8 pre-school children.

In Montessori Classroom 2 - There was 1 staff member directly caring for and working with 8 pre-school children.

In Montessori Classroom 3 - There were 2 staff members directly caring for and working with 13 pre-school children.

A transition year student was also present on the day of 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:

- (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) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 registration records of pre-school children attending the service, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each preschool child.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) The inspector observed the following on the day of inspection.

Physical Environment

On arrival to the service all the children were settled contently within their own classrooms working on table activities such as Montessori tasks, magnetic connectors and modelling dough. Staff were engaged with children in their work, affording them opportunities and space to work on activities independently while being present if any child required support or assistance. The inspector observed children supporting one another, moving from table to table as they chose, to sit and accomplish activities of their choice. Children were frequently overheard asking their key educators if they knew who had a certain activity or task and if they could have it next, as they saw it was missing from the shelf where it was normally placed.

Each Montessori classroom had narrow shelving at the child's level equipped with a variety of Montessori tasks for the children to choose from, which incorporated aspects of the practical life, mathematics, language and culture aspects of the Montessori Pedagogy.

The inspector observed that if children wanted a break, they could meander in and out to the interest activity area, which the educators in Montessori rooms 2 and 3 maintained clear overview of.

Interest areas such as a soft rest and reading area, farm table, construction area, dolls house, kitchen area and art and creativity area were provided to encourage imaginary play.

Basic Care Needs

Staff sat with the children during snack time, chatting about activities and the children's plans for the afternoon after the session. Children used the toilet facilities as needed with staff responding promptly to children's cues for help as required. When required staff reminded children to wash their hands post toileting and ensured that all children had washed their hands prior to the snack time.

The children had access to their individual drinking bottles throughout the session. A snack of cheese and sliced apples was provided by the staff for the children.

Supporting Relationships and Interactions around Children

The children demonstrated a strong focus on their activities of choice, carrying them out confidently and smiling delightfully at their accomplishments reinforced by their educators' positive feedback such as "You did a great job!" , " ..you worked hard on that, I know it was hard, but you kept trying and that was the most important thing, so well done !".

Staff also took time to sit and work with children individually on their Montessori skills assessments, chatting amicably as they went through the checklists and again complementing them on their good work.

The positive environment created by the warmth and gentle interactions of the staff with the children in their learning environment, was mirrored by the children themselves in the way that they gently and politely spoke with each other. The transition year student who was on work experience in the service also mirrored the positive interactions and was observed enjoying the engaging conversations with the children while they proudly showed her their work.

At collection time, staff were observed sharing their knowledge and observations of each child's progress with the child's parent / guardian.

Parents were invited to step inside the service and observe their child as they completed activities before departing for home. Each child's individual learning folder was available on a shelf by the exit door and available for parents to review at any time they wanted to.

On the day of inspection children were learning about the world and its position in the solar system. Staff were observed thanking a child who had brought a globe from home to demonstrate the position of various countries in the world and their proximity to Ireland. The other children also expressed their gratitude to the child telling them, "It was a great idea to bring it in".

In discussion with the registered provider, the inspector was advised that parental involvement in the service's curriculum is encouraged. Parents had recently visited the service to provide singing extra-curricular activities

such as dancing and singing for all the children. Other parents had visited to talk about their jobs and explain what their jobs entailed.

The registered provider also informed the inspector, of plans for the children in the service to interact and visit the Carlow Day Centre for Older Persons which was in progress of construction next to the service. Both organisations had come together to decide on having a connecting gateway boundary at the back of both services so that both the children and older persons could have supervised visits to each other, building community connections.

The registered provider communicated information in hard copy to parents prior to registration and their child's commencement in the service. On an ongoing basis up to date news was sent to parents monthly via a private media application.

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 service was secured at the main entrance with a high internal lock. Staff could see any persons that approached the entrance of the service through the large clear windows in the classrooms on the left hand side and back of the building., While transitioning to the secure outdoor play area the staff ensured that the entrance gate to the residence at the front of the premises was secured and that the carpark which they crossed through to the secure outdoor play area was clear.

All cleaning equipment and materials were safely locked away from the children's classrooms, and the kitchenette was inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

The children's toilets were observed to be clean and well maintained with toilet paper and hand-washing facilities within easy access to the children. Liquid soap and paper towelling were supplied in each of the three children's toilets, which the children were observed to use independently after toileting, messy play and before snack time.

Administration of Medication:

The service had an adequate administration of medication policy. There were no children currently attending the service who required medication however staff demonstrated to the inspector that they were well informed of the procedures to follow in the event of a child requiring temperature reducing, prescribed or emergency medication.

Outing:

There was an adequate outings policy in place in the service which the staff were well informed of. The registered provider explained that the outings policy was rarely implemented currently, however when the Carlow Day Centre for Older Persons is completed, the service would like to implement the outings policy for visits to the day service and older persons. Both services had come together to design a safe entrance between the two services, at the back of the buildings to connect the two communities.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The Garda vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The Garda vetting disclosure for the staff member has been obtained; a chart has been developed to ensure all staff members' Garda vetting disclosure certificates are maintained within the three previous years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of staff member's Garda Vetting Certificate, dated within the previous three years.

Summary Comment

The actions undertaken following inspection were appropriate to address the non-compliance.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff in the service demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's daily attendance and departure times from the service were recorded.

(3)(a)(b) The staff ensured that no other person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without their entry being approved by an employee. All authorised visitors to the service were required to record the date of entry, their name, contact number, reason for entry, check in and out times in the visitors record book.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a sessional Montessori service for up to 28 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the service. The maximum number of children currently attending the service is 33.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 November 2025 to the 27 November 2026.