

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW034
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Name of Service:	Play Together Montessori & Afterschool
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Address of Service:	Carlow Educate Together National School, Best Field, Athy Road, Carlow, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 TW74
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Name of Registered Provider:	Eleanor Peters
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	04/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & 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
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Description of service

Play Together Montessori and Afterschool is a registered full day care childcare service which operates from a purpose-built childcare premises located on the grounds of the Carlow Educate Together National School on the Athy road just outside Carlow town. The service operates from 08:00 to 18:00 hours providing a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service, part-time service and full day childcare for preschool children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is also registered to provide a school age service.

The premises is comprised of two classrooms and has an onsite outdoor play area with a sheltered outdoor classroom at the back of the premises and a secured grass surface outdoor play area to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There were seven staff members employed in the service. All seven 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.

The inspection focused on assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used under regulations 15, 16, 19 and 24. The scope of the inspection included the two outdoor areas and both classrooms.

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 designated 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) There was a designated person in charge in the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (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.
- (c) A clear outline of the management of the structure was demonstrated in the service, staff were aware of the lines of authority, accountability, their roles and responsibilities in the service.
- (2) Staff files for the seven staff members employed in the service 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 certificates were available on file, for each staff member. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting certificates were available for two staff members 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.

(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) The inspector observed throughout the inspection that there were an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children. An additional staff member was supernumerary and available to provide support in either classroom or to provide relief for staff breaks.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed in each of the classrooms.

In Room 1 there were 13 preschool children aged 2 years and eight months to 5 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

After the sessional ECCE finished at 12:00 hours there were 8 children remaining directly cared for by 2 staff members.

In Room 2 there were 15 preschool children directly cared for by 3 staff members.

At 14:00 hours 6 children from Room 1, remaining for the full day care service moved to Room 2 where they joined 10 preschool children remaining for a full day care service, and were directly supervised by 3 staff members.

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the staff the inspector was assured that there were always at least 2 adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

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) There was a registration form available in respect of each child enrolled in the service. A sample of 12 forms completed by the parents were reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

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

(1)(a) - (i) The inspector observed that documents required providing information for (a) to (h) were available for inspection and compliant under Regulation 16.

(j)(k) A sample of medication records and accident and incident records maintained by the service were reviewed by the inspector and were found to be recorded in detail and in line with the service's administration of medication policy and Accident /Incident policy.

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 that both classrooms had been carefully planned and created to provide a stimulating and engaging play environment for the children. Each of the two classrooms had clear identifiable areas of interest, that included kitchen/home corners, dress-up rails, art and craft areas, cosy rest and reading areas, sensory areas and low-level shelving that had an easily accessible Montessori area, jigsaws, connective and manipulative play resources, small world animal and character figurines, dolls houses and play equipment.

The children were observed to be familiar and aware of their daily schedule in the service. Large clear visual schedule pictograms were displayed in each room, outlining when certain activities such as free play, circle time, mealtimes, outdoor play and planned activity times took place.

Children transitioned from each activity with ease and familiarity enjoying "movement time" where the children and staff carried out movement actions.

During the activity one little child obtained an accidental soft hand bump from a friend, which was immediately responded to by a staff member who calmed and reassured the child, providing nurturing and calming cuddles while also applying a cool pack to the sore hand. Meanwhile the other staff members reassessed the situation without interrupting the fun, by ensuring that all the children made sure that they had adequate space around them while doing the activities. After a few minutes, the child who had hurt their hand returned happily to the

group activity. The inspector observed that the staff member while comforting the child also continuously watched for any discolouration on the site of the injury and once the child returned happily to play, the staff member completed an accident and incident form in line with the service's accident and incident policy.

The inspector observed that in both classrooms' children had emotions boards which could assist them in helping to identify their feelings at any time.

Each of the areas of interest were clearly visually labelled with questions posed such as "How does the home corner help me learn?" "How does snack time help me learn?"

Staff were continually engaging with the children, sitting or kneeling at their level, listening to them and noting emergent interests which they would often document on the classroom's "Emergent Interest" board for implementation into curricular planning or when possible extended upon at the time of expression.

The inspector observed that the continuous staff interaction and gentle responses by staff to the children encouraged interest and enthusiasm in the activities and learning, greatly alleviating any negative behaviour in the group but also promoting the children to mirror the staff's behaviours, often being kind to each other, helping and comforting each other, sharing and including each other and praising each other's success by saying "Good Job", "Well done" or "That's great".

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 with a keypad call system at the main entrance door. The outdoor play area in the service was surrounded with high metal fence at the front and with a child height fence surrounding the outdoor play area at the back of the service.

This helped in ensuring that any unauthorised person was prevented from entering the premises and to prevent any child from exiting the service unsupervised.

All cleaning equipment and materials were safely secured in designated storage units, away from the children.

Infection Control:

The service had an adequate infection control policy in place. A separate handwashing and toileting policy were attached as part of the service's Infection Control policy.

Hand washing was observed to be carried out by both staff and the children, prior to snack and mealtimes, after assisting with wiping noses, after toileting and after messy or outdoor play.

Toileting was supported according to individual children's needs.

Cleaning schedules were displayed in each classroom and indicated that these were recorded daily by the staff present, as tasks were completed.

Administration of Medication:

Staff assured the inspector that they were informed of procedures and on how to administer any medication, in line with the service's policy on administration of medication. On review of a sample of four administration of medication records, the procedure details had been recorded specifically in line with the administration of medication policy in the service.

Safe Sleep:

The service had a supply of stackable beds and appropriate bedlinen available for any child attending the service to take a nap in the quiet area of the classroom, if required, an adequate safe sleep policy specific to children aged 2 years upwards was available in the service.

Outing:

The service had an adequate outings policy in place, to implement when taking children on an outing away from the service. The policy detailed the preparation, risk assessment and communication with parents/guardians prior to the outing, the precautions, and procedures to be taken prior to and during the outing and the procedures to be carried out in the event of an emergency.

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) Children's daily attendance records were available for the inspector to review. It was observed that the staff recorded the checking in and out of each child attending the service daily, detailing each child's time of entry and exit to the service.

(3)(a) The staff and registered provider assured the inspector that no other person apart from children attending the service, parents/guardians dropping or collecting children, staff members could enter the premises without being approved by a staff member.

(b) The inspector observed that a daily record was maintained of any authorised visitors permitted entry to the service. The inspector was requested to record their entry to the service, which included the date, name, contact number, reason for entry, who approved the access and time of entry and departure

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) There were three staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children.

At all times while the service was operating, there were three staff members with FAR training in attendance. On review of the staff roster the inspector was assured that there was always at least one staff member with FAR training onsite while children attended the service.

(2) (a)(b) A first aid box was available in each of the two classrooms. Records demonstrated that the contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

The first aid boxes were always available to the staff and children attending the service.

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.

(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 monthly fire drills carried out in the service was maintained by the registered provider. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 28 November 2024.

(b) Records of the annual maintenance checks of the service's firefighting equipment and fire alarm system were maintained. The last maintenance check for the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place on the 22 August 2024. The last maintenance check for the fire alarm was recorded as having taken place on the 04 December 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed inside the entrance door. A fire assembly point was clearly signed in the outdoor play area.

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 full day childcare service for up to 44 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the entrance hall.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 28 March 2024 to the 27 March 2025.