

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015CW042

Name of Service: Suantraí Montessori

Address of Service: Tinryland, Carlow, Co. Carlow

Eircode: R93 K2C9

Name of Registered Provider: Frances Byrne

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 15/11/2024

No of pre-school children: AM 29 PM N/A

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 Click or tap here to enter text.

Description of service

Suantraí Montessori is a registered session early childhood care and education (ECE) service which operates from the rural village of Tinryland, just outside Carlow town. The service operates from an extension onto the registered provider's private dwelling, which is comprised of three floors, with a classroom and toilet facilities on each floor. The three classrooms are referred to as the bottom, middle and top classrooms. There is a designated outdoor play area for the preschool children located at the back of the building.

The service caters for children between the ages of 2 to 6 years, providing a sessional ECE service from 08:45 to 12:15 hours.

Staffing

There are eight staff members including the registered provider employed in the service. On the day of inspection, a student in early childhood care and education was also present. All staff members who as part of their role in the service were employed to work directly with the preschool children held qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 in early childhood care and education 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, 10, 11, 15, 21, 23, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used under regulations 10, 15, and 21. The scope of the inspection included the outdoor area, and the three 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 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 designated person in charge on the day of inspection and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) Both the designated person in charge and deputy designated person in charge were onsite during the inspection.

(2) Staff files for the eight staff members employed to work directly with the children as part of their role in the service were reviewed by the inspector and the following observations found. A student file was also reviewed on the day of inspection.

(a)(b) There were two validated references available in each staff member's file from either a past employer or reputable source in the case of a person who had no past employers. Two references were also on file for the student present in the service.

(c) Garda Vetting certificates were available on file for each staff member and the student working directly with the children. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as no staff member had lived outside of the State for a period of six months or longer.

(4) Certificates of accredited qualifications were available in each of the eight staff members' files demonstrating that each staff member held a qualification ranging from Level 6 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

On review of documentation, the service's policies, procedures and statements, it was observed that the registered provider ensured, that all documents required for compliance with regulation 10 were on file and appropriate in contents for the service.

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 was an adequate number of staff members directly caring for the children throughout the inspection.

(3) There were 29 early years children, aged between 2 years and eight months to 5 years, present with 7 staff Members, including the registered provider and 1 student working directly with the children.

In the bottom classroom there were 11 children directly cared for by 2 staff members and 1 student. The registered provider is also assigned to this classroom but is available to float and provided relief in other classrooms as required.

The middle classroom had 7 children present with 2 staff members directly caring for them and in the top classroom had 11 children and 2 staff members present.

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 the 12 preschool records available for the 11 children registered to attend the service, the inspector was assured that all particulars (a) to (i) were recorded in detail by the registered provider

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The inspector observed that in each of the three classrooms there was adequate and age-appropriate interest areas, play equipment and materials provided for the children in attendance. Areas of interest included kitchen/home areas, rest and reading areas, construction /transport areas, sensory play and art and creativity areas. Low level shelving provided children with easy access to visually labelled boxes and baskets of play materials which included jigsaws, connective and manipulative resources and small word figurines. The children were focused on the week’s theme of science week and carried out experiments with their keyworkers in each classroom.

Outside in the secured play area, an outdoor wooden cabin provided a classroom for the children to shelter in during inclement weather, while outside. The area also contained a swing set, covered sandbox, ride on toys and a large grass area to play ball.

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:

Access to the early years' service could only be permitted by a staff member upon answering the lower ground/ bottom classroom door. Visitors to the service could be observed through the window of the lower ground classroom.

No unauthorised persons could gain access to the service and no child or children could leave the service unsupervised.

The outdoor play area was secured with a wooden fence.

Cleaning equipment and cleaning products were securely locked away in the service.

Infection Control:

Daily cleaning schedules and checklists were maintained.

There were an adequate number of children's toilet units located on each floor, within each of the three classrooms, which the children could access independently, as required.

Each handwash basin was supplied with liquid hand soap and a paper towel dispenser which the inspector observed were easy for the children to use independently. Pedal operated rubbish bins were available in the toilets and in the classroom for the safe disposal of tissues and towelling.

The staff were observed to monitor handwashing, ensuring children were prompted on occasions of forgetfulness and staff demonstrated to the children how they frequently washed their hands after similar tasks.

Administration of Medication:

There was an adequate administration of medication policy observed by the inspector to be in place in the service, if a child required administration of an anti-febrile medication or in the instance where a child in attendance at the service required child centred medication plan, for the administration of a specific medication.

Outing:

There was an adequate outings policy available specific to 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) On review staff files, the inspector observed that two staff members held the required accredited first aid responder (FAR) certificates on file. There were two staff members with FAR accreditation present in the service on the day of inspection.

It is acknowledged that the third staff member held current basic paediatric first aid training.

(2)(a)(b) The inspector observed that there was a first aid box on a high shelf in each of the three classrooms, which were available for the children in attendance in 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 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) The registered provider demonstrated that a record of any fire drills carried out in the service was maintained. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 13 November 2024.
- (b) Records of the maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained in the service. The last date of the annual service for the buildings alarm system was recorded as having taken place on the 19 December 2023 and for the firefighting equipment on the 04 September 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed just inside the door in the entrance hall. A fire assembly point was clearly signposted 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

On review of the service's current insurance certificate, the inspector observed that the insurance certificate detailed cover for a childcare service for 44 children, for the period from 02 September 2024 to 27 March 2025.