

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL009		
Name of Service:	Barnesmore Montessori School		
Address of Service:	Barnesmore Community Centre, Barnesmore, Co. Donegal		
Eircode:	F94 C902		
Name of Registered Provider:	Suzanne Costello		
Service type:	Full day care, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	02/09/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM 13
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan		
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

Barnesmore Montessori School is a privately owned full day care service operating between the hours of 08.00 and 18.00, Monday to Friday. The service also offers sessional preschool from 10.00-13.00 each weekday. Children attending the service range in age from 2-6 years of age and avail of a Montessori based curriculum. The service participates on the Early Childhood Care and Education programme. The service operates from two separate rooms within the single-story building of Barnesmore Community Centre. Sanitary accommodation for staff and children, a storage area and a kitchen are also available on site. The children have daily access to safe and suitable outdoor play areas, on the premises.

Staffing

There were five adults employed to work in the service. The registered provider does not currently work in the service on a daily basis but is available to provide support and relief cover when needed. There is a person in charge and a named deputy person in charge on the premises during the hours of operation.

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 an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,23,25,26 and 28. However on inspection however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, 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)

The registered provider ensured that:

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.*
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.*
- (c) There was 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.*

(2)

On the day of the inspection, five adults were present, the registered provider and four adults who were employed to work directly with the children.

Staff files in respect of six adults were reviewed and the following information was available:

- (a) Eight written references from past employers for five of the adults.*
- (b) Four written reference from a reputable source for three of the adults.*
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.*
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.*

(4)

Six of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.
On the morning of the inspection 4 adults cared for 27 children aged between 2 years and 7 months and 4 years and 10 months.
On the morning of the inspection:
- In the “Montie” room, 2 adults cared for 14 children aged between 2 years and 7 months and 3 years and 8 months.
 - In the “Montessori” room, 2 adults cared for 13 children aged between 3 years and 5 months and 4 years and 10 months.
- In the afternoon :
- 3 adults cared for 13 children aged between 2 years and 7 months and 4 years and 5 months.

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)

Basic Need

- The service had a healthy eating policy in place.
- Meals and snacks were served at regular intervals throughout the day. Children brought healthy snacks and lunches from home and perishable items were stored in the refrigerator.
- The service provides a hot meal to children during the day with an alternative available if required. On the day of inspection, the hot meal was turkey or ham with mashed potatoes and vegetables. The alternative was homemade vegetable soup with ham or cheese sandwiches.
- Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day.
- Each room was spacious, with enough room for children to move around freely.
- Before outdoor play, children were assisted to dress in waterproof outdoor clothing and wellingtons.

Supporting relationships

- A key worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for designated children.
- The staff members demonstrated warmth in their interactions with children. For example, a number of children had commenced in the service on the day of the inspection, staff sat with the children to provide one to one reassurance and support.
- In the "Montessori" room, there was an emphasis on supporting the children's independence in their environment. Children were encouraged and praised for completing tasks independently such as pouring their own drink or carrying their own chair to circle time.

- Staff advised the inspector that a technology application was used to communicate with parents during the day. Drop off and pick up times were used as an opportunity to share information with parents about their child's day.

Physical and material environment

- In the "Montessori" room, children had access to a large assortment of Montessori equipment such as dressing frames, items for pouring and polishing, puzzles of different sizes and equipment to develop children's senses such as colour boards.
- A painting easel with paintbrushes and paint pots was available to the children throughout the session.
- For imaginative play, the children had access to sand and water trays with sea life animal toys, construction toys and a home corner with a play kitchen and dolls.
- The room contained a well-stocked nature table with ended items such as acorns, twigs, leaves and wooden logs.
- The "Montie" room consisted of a large, bright, spacious hall which was divided into areas of interest for young children, such as a construction toy area, table top toys, a small world farm area, sensory trays with sand and water. Montessori equipment was accessible to the children on low level shelving.
- A library area with soft cushions and matting was available to allow the children to rest throughout the day if they so wished. Stackable beds are also available in the service for children to sleep if desired.
- The tables and chairs in the room were suitable for the ages of the children in attendance.
- The service has two outdoor areas, one was a small area adjacent to the Montie room that provided play equipment including a mud kitchen.
- A second, larger area to the front of the building had both play equipment and a large polytunnel.
- On the day of the inspection the children were happy to discover a large pumpkin had grown over the summer months as well as raspberries which the children enjoyed tasting as part of their snack.
- Low level tables and chairs were also available in this area for children to engage in tabletop activities or enjoy their snack outdoor in all weather conditions.

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 door was secure upon the inspector's arrival to the service and remained secure throughout the inspection.
- All toys and equipment were observed to be in good condition, free from sharp edges and pinch points.
- The service was in a clean and hygienic condition on the day of inspection. Cleaning records evidenced that a cleaning schedule was in place and cleaning was carried out daily.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach on high shelving.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- The outdoor area was secured with high fencing and gates to prevent a preschool child gaining unsupervised access to the road.
- Blind cord restrictors were in place.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, soap and paper hand towels were available for effective handwashing for children and adults.
- Staff reminded children to wash their hands before mealtimes and after using the toilet.
- Pedal operated bins were available for the safe disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of the inspection however on discussion, staff demonstrated they were aware of the correct procedure to be carried out to ensure the safe administration of medicine.

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) Five staff in the service were trained in First Aid Responder (FAR). At least one trained member of staff was available to the children at all times.

(2)(a)(b) There were two suitably equipped first aid boxes available in the service, one in each care room. Each first aid box was stored in an easily accessible position.

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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 fire drills was kept by the service with the most recent drill carried out on 30 June 2025, before the service closed for summer.

(1)(b) Records were available to evidence that the fire fighting equipment was last serviced in March 2025 and smoke alarms were serviced on 05 March 2025

(4) Fire evacuation maps were displayed on the wall in each area of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Non-Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection, the registered provider did not have adequate insurance was in place for full day care. The insurance policy available on the day covered 40 children in part time care up to 27 November 2025. It is acknowledged that adequate insurance for full day care was obtained and in place from the 03 September 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Adequate insurance has now been obtained.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photograph of new policy submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,

Non-Compliance Information

(c)(d) In the “Montessori” Room, a large accumulation of mould was observed on two blinds and on one window seal, posing a risk to children’s health.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The blinds have been adequately cleaned, and the window seal has been removed. The mould grew over 2 months as the service was closed. Ventilation to the room has been increased and a dehumidifier is in use over the weekends.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.