

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL051
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Name of Service:	Happy Start Montessori Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Little Angels, The Rock, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F94 KR7P
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ciara Dolan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	16 January 2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2nd Floor, St Conal's Campus, Kilmacrennan Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	L.McGlynn
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

Happy Start Montessori preschool is a privately owned and operated service in the centre of the town of Ballyshannon, in south Donegal. The service currently operates two sessional services concurrently for children aged 2-6 years. The operating hours of the two sessions are from 9.00am-12.00md and 1.00pm-4.00pm in one room and 9.30am-12.30pm in the other room. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme.

The service operates from a single story purpose adapted premises that was previously used as primary school. The premises consists of two preschool rooms with an interconnecting hallway that has sanitary accommodation for both children and staff. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are six staff members currently employed to work in the service directly with the children. This includes the registered provider who is on the premises on a daily basis and works directly with children. One staff member is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model for early childhood services. Each of the six staff members hold a relevant qualification in early childhood care and education.

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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

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

(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

(2) There were six staff members employed in the service at the time of the inspection. The vetting files for four staff members had been reviewed previously and therefore are not included in this inspection report. Of the two staff vetting files reviewed the following were available:

(a) Two written and validated references from past employers for the two staff members.

(c) A vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for one staff member.

(4) Evidence of the completion of a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent qualification was available for the two staff members.

Non-Compliance Information

1. It is acknowledged that a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána was on file for one staff member. However, the disclosure was dated two years prior to them taking up their current position in the service. On discussion with the registered provider it was established that the

vetting was obtained at a time when the person was appointed to a relief panel to work on an ad hoc basis as required. The regulation requires that each staff member is subject to Garda Vetting prior to them taking up employment in the service therefore an up-to-date disclosure is required for this staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A new vetting application was made for the staff member and is now on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. A copy of the Garda Vetting disclosure was submitted.

Summary Comment

The information submitted by the registered provider has been accepted and the non-compliance has been adequately addressed.

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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of staff members working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (3) The minimum adult/child ratio was maintained throughout the inspection.
- On the morning of inspection, in the red room, 18 children aged 3-5 years were being cared for by three staff members.
- In the yellow room, 12 children aged 2-5 years were being cared for by three staff members.

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.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) all documents and records relating to references and Garda and police vetting obtained under Regulation 9(2) are retained for a period of 5 years from the date on which the person to whom the document or record relates commences working in the service, and

(b) a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

(4) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by a parent or guardian of a child but only in respect of information concerning that child.

(5) For the purposes of operating the pre-school service, a record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider.

Compliance Information

A records detailed at (a) to (k) in the regulation were reviewed on this inspection and were found to be kept in writing by the service. Records were noted to be maintained up to date and were observed to be completed in a timely and accurate manner as required.

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 play environments both indoors and outdoors contained a sufficient range of resources to support the learning and development needs of the number of children attending.

The indoor play facilities consisted of two bright and spacious preschool rooms used by different groups of children. Each of the rooms contained play equipment and materials that were organised into different areas of interest for children to explore. Open shelving units were used to display the majority of the resources which created visibility and easy access for children. Children were observed moving freely around the rooms and choosing play materials as desired. There was adequate quantities of each type of play material to facilitate small group and parallel play with two or more children. Suitable sized tables and chairs were available to aid children's play and roll up floor mats provided a choice for children who wished to do some activities at floor level. Wall displays in the room included children's family photographs and birthday walls.

As the service operates under a Montessori ethos, the range and types of play materials available were specific to the learning aims and goals of a Montessori curriculum. Play items were grouped to isolate different learning concepts encompassing the areas of science, numeracy, literacy, sensorial, geography, practical life skills and problem solving. Each of the areas were resourced with appropriate Montessori play materials to cater to the learning goal of that area. The range of materials available in each room included building toys, jigsaws, peg boards, threading toys, flash cards, games, puzzles, art easels, sensory toys, shape sorters and toys promoting practical life skills. A significant amount of the play resources were made from natural materials and a nature table in each room contained pine cones, shells and feathers. There was a cosy area in each room with a well-stocked library containing age-appropriate books and reading materials.

The outdoor area consisted of a natural grass covered garden area with a concrete path boundary. There was adequate space in the area for the children to engage in gross motor physical play. The range of play equipment within the area included wooden planting beds, large tyres, a seesaw, a wooden tepee, wall mounted filling and

pouring games and wooden picnic seating. A large canopy covered part of the area with concrete ground surfacing allowing children access to outdoors in all weathers. A number of additional play items were available in a storage shed that staff confirmed were added to the area. This included a well-stocked mud kitchen, blocks, ball play resources and hula hoops.

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 had taken measures to safeguard the health safety and welfare of the children attending. Entry and exit points to the service were secured to prevent unauthorised access or the unsupervised exit of a preschool child. The outdoor area was secured with stone walls and boundary fencing. There were no obvious hazards in the outdoor area or the play equipment available. Hazardous items such as cleaning materials were inaccessible to children and storage areas remained secured to prevent children accessing.

Infection Control:

The service presented as a clean and hygienic environment with evidence of ongoing cleaning and maintenance. Staff maintained a daily record of cleaning carried out in both the preschool rooms and the sanitary accommodation which was noted to be up to date. Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available in the sanitary accommodation and in each preschool room to facilitate handwashing and children were observed washing their hands at appropriate intervals for example, after toileting and prior to eating. There was a low-level fridge in each room for the safe storage of perishable items brought in by children in their lunch. Foot pedal operated bins were available throughout the service for the safe disposal of waste and there was no evidence of waste disposal being accessible to children in the outdoor area.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was administered to children in line with the services administration of medication policy. Discussions with staff and records reviewed evidenced that parental consent is sought prior to the administering of medication. The consent detailed the required information including the specifics of the mediation and the procedure for administration. A record of each dose administered is maintained by the staff member, witnessed and signed by parents on collection. The records also contained the time, date and quantity administered.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Blind cords in the south facing windows in both preschool rooms were unsecured posing a risk of injury to a child if they were to gain to access them.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

1. Cord blinds have now been secured and will be regularly checked and monitored.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of secured blind cords.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider address the non-compliance identified on inspection. The requirements of this regulation have been met.