

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY043
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Name of Service:	Bright Sparks Playschool & Montessori
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Address of Service:	9 Meadow Grove, Milltown Rd, Tuam, Co. Galway.
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Eircode:	H54 E544
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary-Margaret Gilligan
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
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

This preschool service is in a private residential area in the town of Tuam, county Galway. The service caters for children aged between 2 and 6 years of age, from Monday to Friday between 9am and 2pm. This preschool service offers the option of part-time care service, an (ECCE) Early Childhood Care and Education and sessional care programme. The preschool service operates from a converted residential house with 4 playrooms. The pre-school children have an outdoor play area to the rear of the premises with a variety of special interest areas. The service also has a sheltered area for inclement weather activities.

Staffing

The registered provider is the named person in charge and there is a named designated deputy. There is a total of 11 adults working on the premises which includes the registered provider. Three of these adults worked with school aged children and a volunteer. The adults working directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education between a Level 5 and a level 8 on the National Qualifications 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 and safety. The inspection 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 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) The registered provider ensured that there was a designated person in charge and a named person available to deputise.
- (b) The staff roster indicated that both the designated person in charge and deputy was on the premises while the pre-school children were present.
- (c) A management structure was available in the service and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities. All 11 adult recruitment files were reviewed:
- (2)(a) There were 19 of the required 22 written and validated references from previous employers.
- (b) There were 3 validated references were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for all 11 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting time frames as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) International police vetting was available for two adults working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than six months.
- (4) There was evidence that 10 adults who required a childcare qualification had attained at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to 8 on the National Framework of qualifications or a qualification deemed to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(d) International police vetting for 1 adult who had lived outside the jurisdiction for more than 6 months was available but not translated. Therefore, compliance could not be assessed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider responded to say that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service will ensure that all police vetting that require translation will be carried out prior to an adult working in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence of the translated police vetting was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and has been deemed to have met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and staff rosters indicated that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children.
- (3) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. There were 6 adults working directly and caring for 20 pre-school children in the morning and afternoon.

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*

Compliance Information

19 (1) (a)

BASIC NEEDS:

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service and the food observed was healthy and nutritious.
- The children were afforded plenty of time to enjoy their snack in a relaxed and unhurried manner. Crockery and plates were given to children during snack times.

- The children had access to a water on a low-level table which allowed them the opportunity to take a drink if thirsty.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence.
- Hand washing was observed prior to snack time, after outdoor play and toileting.
- Each child's privacy and dignity were respected, while they were either toileted independently or with some assistance as required.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of child size couches in a designated rest and relaxation area in the playrooms.
- Stackable beds were available and were used on the day for rest and sleep for children.
- Children were observed at table top activities, playing in the clearly defined interest areas and in circle time. The children enjoyed outdoor, messy and sensory play.
- The theme for the week was 'Sensory and Messy Play'.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- A key person system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The role of the key person was to liaise with parents and guardians.
- The service provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school including the child's likes, interests, preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection and drop off times, via text messages, multimedia application and by phone calls.
- Each child had a learning journal identifying their likes and preferences and showing their art and craft work.
- The staff were observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them and responded to their requests. The staff interacted in a positive way with the children e.g. they sat at the children's level, maintained good eye contact, showed empathy and a good understanding of each child.
- Staff were observed helping children find solutions, supporting them and talking to children in a variety of ways- discussing, questioning, modelling, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.

- The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children’s choices. Children were supported by the staff during periods of individual and group-based activities. The staff sensitively supervised and intervened when necessary.
- Transitions between activities were well planned by staff and were carried out in a calm and relaxed environment.
- Staff communicated effectively in a professional manner as they carried out their programme of care throughout the day.

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 upon arrival to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children and to prevent unauthorised adults from entering.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing to protect the children within.
- Cleaning agents and medication were secured out of reach of the children.
- Storage facilities were inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste were provided.
- Child friendly handwashing posters were located above the wash handbasins to promote good handwashing practices.
- Individually labelled containers were available where clean linen was stored.

Administration of Medication:

- There was no medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Stackable beds were available for sleep and clean bed linen. Soft seating was also available in the playrooms for children to relax and rest during the day.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exit doors and passageways were clear from obstruction.
- The fire exit routes and fire assembly points were readily identified with clear and illuminated signage.

Outing:

- The service does not carry out outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for the 11 adults, however 3 of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous 3 years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting' posing a potential risk for children

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider responded to say:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Renewal of Garda vetting will be monitored and renewed every three years as required.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

The three outstanding Garda vetting renewals were submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The documented evidence was reviewed by the inspector and has been deemed to have met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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) The service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid responder for children was available to the children attending the pre-school service. Two adults had current training in first aid response for children.
- (2)(a) The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the service.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped with all contents within expiry dates and were available to the children attending the pre-school 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service the last fire drill was conducted on the 03 July 2025.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment in the premises and was serviced on 24 July 2025.
- Records were available in relation to the number, type and maintenance of and fire, smoke alarms in the premises with the annual check dated the 24 July 2025.
- (4) A notice was displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for 39 pre-school children. The insurance policy for the part-time day care service is valid until the 27 March 2026.