

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY101
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Name of Service:	Goldilocks Montessori
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Address of Service:	Magheramore, Oughterard, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 C914
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Name of Registered Provider:	Josephine O'Donohue
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Nic Dhonnacha
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 private pre-school service is in a rural countryside of Meagheramore, just outside the village of Oughterard Co Galway. It offers a sessional day care service, Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 12.30. It can cater for children aged 2 to 6 years old. The service consists of one large and one smaller playroom in the registered providers home with both adult and children's sanitary areas included. The service also has access to a large secure outdoor play area. The preschool offers a child-based curriculum focusing on the emerging interests of the child and additionally some Montessori methods of play.

Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge and an additional 2 staff members and 1 student over the age of 18 on a childcare work placement were on the premises on the day of inspection. There are three staff in total working and caring for the children in the service that includes the registered provider. The three staff hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. The adults have documentary evidence of on-going training 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 Record in Relation to Pre-School Service.

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, student 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.*

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 the designated person in charge and there was a named deputy person who could deputise in the service if required.

- (b) The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy person was available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.

Four files were reviewed on the 11/03/2026 these included the registered provider, 2 childcare workers and 1 student over the age of 18 years on work placement.

(2)(a) Five written and validated references were available on file from a past employer.

- (b) Three written and validated references were available from a source other than the past employer.

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(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff and the student.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available on file for 2 adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 months, while over the age of 18 years.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were obtained prior to any person being appointed and allowed access to the children attending the pre-school service.

(4) Three adults held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of a Level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for all three adults.

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

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1) The attendance records for the previous three weeks were reviewed by the early years' inspector, indicating that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the preschool children.

(3) The adult/child ratio was correct and maintained on the day of inspection. There were 3 adults and 1 student (who was supervised by qualified staff) working directly with and caring for 14 children. All the children were aged between three and five years old.

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(8)(c) The registered provider did not operate the service single-handedly. The registered provider and two additional staff members work in the preschool service.

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:

- (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) (g) The service policies, procedures and statement were available in a folder on the day of inspection.
- (h) Details of children's attendance was accurately recorded.
- (i) A staff roster was available.
- (j) Documentation was available to demonstrate that signed parental consent was required prior to administering medication to a child should it be required and that administration of medication should be witnessed.
- (k) Details of accidents and incidents were recorded and there was evidence available that parents were informed following an accident or incident involving their child.

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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

Basic Needs

(1) (a)

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service. The food observed was healthy and nutritious.
- The snacks provided by parents and guardians consisted of a selection of sandwiches, brown bread, cheese, ham, yogurts, crackers and pieces of fruit. The person in charge provided the children with pancakes on the day of inspection.
- The children's water bottles were available and accessible throughout the session.
- The children were observed enjoying snack time. They sat with the person in charge and were provided with plenty of time to enjoy their snack and meals in a relaxed and unhurried environment.
- The children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence. Supervision and assistance was provided as required.
- All the children were toilet trained and either toileted independently or with some assistance as required. The dignity of children using the toilet was preserved throughout the session.
- The person in charge prompted the children to wash their hands before snack time, after toileting, after blowing their noses, after outdoor play and prior to going home.
- They had plenty of opportunities to move about freely, exploring their environment and choosing various play materials and toys to play with.

Supporting Relationships

- The staff verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school. This information was provided at collection and drop off times and by phone calls if necessary.
- Each child had an individual scrapbook or journal "My Learning Journal" and copy books showing their individual art and craft work, drawings and writings.

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- There was evidence of short, medium and long-term curriculum planning on the notice board in the playroom. The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children's choices.
- During observed interactions, the person in charge demonstrated that she knew the children well, recognising and valuing the children's individual interests, needs and learning. The person in charge 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.
- Following lunch, the children engaged in free play, story time, tabletop activities with coloured sand and learnt about all things Irish for St Patrick's Day.
- The children chatted to the inspector about their day and talked about their families their likes and past times.
- The children played in the designated outdoor play area predominately throughout the inspection.

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 main entrance door into the pre-school was secured to prevent access by an unauthorised person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- The outdoor play area was secured so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area.
- In the playroom, cleaning agents were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- Daily records of attendance were kept for all of children attending the service.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- The heating system in the outdoor play area was securely enclosed and inaccessible to the preschool children.

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Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with warm water, liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels. Thermostatically controlled warm water was available for use by the children to facilitate hygienic hand washing with a temperature less than 43°C. There were two toilets and two wash basins in the sanitary areas for the preschool children to use.
- During the inspection, the children were assisted and encouraged to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after using a tissue, after playing outdoors and on entry/exiting the pre-school service.
- There was a fridge in the playroom for the storage of perishable items from the children's lunch boxes/bags.
- The playroom was adequately ventilated with windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperature at the required level.
- Waste was disposed of in foot pedalled lidded bins in the playroom and in the sanitary area and thereby inaccessible to the children.

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)

It was acknowledged that one staff had undertaken FAR- First Aid Responder training and was available onsite during the operation hours of the preschool service.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in a conspicuous area in the playroom.

(b)

The first aid box was available for use by the adults in the event of an emergency.

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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)

Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 3/03/2026.

(b)

A record of the number, type and maintenance for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system were available. The most recent smoke alarm system and firefighting equipment maintenance service took place respectively on the 20/9/2025 and 22/9/2025.

(4)

Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed throughout the service.

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 22 pre-school children. The policy was valid until the 27th of November 2026.