

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY140
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Name of Service:	Little Hands Montessori
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Address of Service:	Annagh Hill National School, Annagh Hill, Ballyglunin, Tuam, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H54 F104
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Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Mannion, Martin Mannion
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	10/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	29
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. 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

The service is in the local primary school in Annagh hill which is a rural area of county Galway. This preschool service was first notified in 2014, it offers the options of full day care and part time care service from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm and an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programme and sessional programme from 9:15 pm to 12:15 pm, from Monday to Friday. The preschool caters for children aged between 2 to 6 years of age.

Staffing

The registered provider ensured there was a manager who was the person in charge and a person who can deputise. There is a total of 9 adults currently working in the premises which includes the registered provider.

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 manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.
- (b) The registered providers were 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 were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.
- (c) Staff rosters, policies and signage evidence indicated that there was a clear management structure in the service, which identified the lines of authority and accountability within the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

All 9 adult files were reviewed including the registered providers:

- (2)(a)&(b) Eighteen of the validated references on file in respect of 9 adults were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 9 adults. This was in adhere with the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documentary evidence indicated that 2 adults had lived outside the jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months while over the age of 18 years and therefore required police vetting. The police vetting was available for inspection.
- (4) Nine adults held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of Level 5, in Early Childhood Care and education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the two staff.

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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The preschool attendance records and roster for the previous 3 weeks were reviewed and indicated that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children. On the day of inspection, the adult and child ratio were correct and maintained.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to, during the inspection.
- On the morning there were 33 preschool children being directly cared for by 8 adults and 29 preschool being care for by 8 adults.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 staff were on the premises during the operating hours of the service.

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. At 10:30 pm, the snacks were provided by parent, guardians and perishable items were stored in the fridge.
- 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, that 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.
- Children in nappies had their nappies changed in a timely manner throughout the day and adults spoke, sang to children while changing nappies.
- 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, making their Christmas cards, playing in the clearly defined interest area and in circle time.
- The theme for the month was 'Winter and Christmas' in the playrooms.

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 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 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, commentating, 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 relax environment.
- Staff communicated effectively in a professional manner as they carried out their programme of care throughout the day.

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 for children was available to the children attending the pre-school service. The service provided evidence that 5 staff were trained in first aid for children and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) The service had 1 large first aid box with content items in date. It was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the main office on the ground floor.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped and 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 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) A record in writing of fire drills indicated that the last fire drill was conducted on the 16/10/2024.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that firefighting equipment was checked annually. Records confirmed that the firefighting equipment was serviced on the 09/02/2024 and the fire detection and smoke alarms were maintained annually, the last date of maintenance was on the 07/05/2014.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be conducted in the event of a fire was available on file and was displayed in the lobby of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service has in date insurance for 44 preschool children valid until the 27/03/2025.