

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY249
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Name of Service:	Sunflowers Montessori & Creche
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Address of Service:	Sunflower Montessori & Creche, Killeroran Road, Ballygar, Co. Galway
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Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona Lally
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	13/08/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Child and Family Agency, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway City.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan and E. Friel.
Title:	Early Years Inspectors.

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 privately owned pre-school was established in 1992 and is in the village of Ballygar in county Galway. The service currently offers the option of full day care and part time care provision from 8 am to 6 pm and an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school care programmes from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm from Monday to Friday. The service caters for children aged between 0 to 6 years of age. There is a designated sleep room, sanitary facilities and a large outdoor play area to the rear of the service. There is also a kitchen for the preparation of food.

Staffing

The service currently employs 11 adults, which includes the manager, 2 ancillary staff and a cook.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

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 inspectors wish 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)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The registered provider and deputy manager were on the premises when the early years inspectors arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the registered provider or deputy were available on the premises when the pre-school children were present.

(c) Staff rosters and photographic biographies at the reception area of the 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.

All 11 adult files were reviewed including the registered provider.

(2)

(a) Nineteen of the 22 required validated references were available from past employers.

(b) The remaining 3 references were from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for 10 of the 11 adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting time frames as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulator Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Documentary evidence indicated that 1 of the adults had lived in 2 other jurisdictions for longer than 6 consecutive months while over the age of 18 years and therefore required police vetting, both of which were available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available which indicted that 7 of the 8 adults working directly with the children held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a minimum of Level 5, in Early Childhood Care and Education and the eighth adult had a Letter of Eligibility from the Department of children, integration and youth.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was missing for 1 adult for whom it was required, posing a potential risk to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

(2)

(c) Garda vetting has been obtained for the adult for whom it was missing. In future all vetting will be in place prior to commencement of employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (c)

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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained. On the morning of the inspection, there were 25 children present
 - 6 children were aged between 1 to 3 years,
 - 19 children were aged between 3 to 5 years.

- There were 6 staff directly caring for these children.

Additionally, a staff member was designated to kitchen duties, preparing, and serving the service meals.

In the afternoon of the inspection, there were 26 children present

- 6 children were aged between 1 to 3 years,
- 20 children were aged between 3 to 5 years.
- There were 6 staff directly caring for these children.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in 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.

Compliance Information

(15)(1)(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) and (i).

Out of the 44 children registered in the service a sample of 15 children's records were reviewed by the Early Years Inspectors.

The entries reviewed were factual, consistent and accurate.

The 15 sampled records of children contained the following:

- The name and date of birth of the child.

- The date on which the child first attended the service.
 - The date on which the child stopped attending the service (where relevant).
 - The name and address of the child’s parent or guardian, and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
 - Written authorisation / permissions for collecting the child.
 - Details are recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
 - The name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner.
 - A record of any immunisations the child has had.
 - Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical treatment if there was / is an emergency.
- (4) The registered provider advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that all relevant children’s records were kept for 2 years from the date a child stops attending 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:

- The children were afforded plenty of time to enjoy their snack and hot meal in a relaxed and unhurried manner. The service had rolling snack times and children were observed coming and going helping themselves to snacks throughout the day. Crockery and plates were given to children during snack times.
- The children had access to a water on a low-level table in the playrooms which allowed them the opportunity to take a drink if thirsty. Water stations were situated in various locations in the large outdoor play area for children to use as required.

- Children were encouraged and supported by adults 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 from adults. Ten children were in nappies and adults ensured that nappy changing took place as required throughout the day. Adults were observed talking and singing to children during nappy changing.
- 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.
- There was a designated sleep room with 4 standard cots for children under 2 years of age and stackable beds were available for rest and sleep for children over 2 years of age.
- Children were observed at tabletop activities, playing in the clearly defined interest areas and in circle time. The children spent a large portion of the day in the outdoor play area engaged in messy, imaginary and sensory play. Children played in large and small groups and led and choose most of the activities with the support of the adults.

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 in relation to each child's development and to support children achieve their milestones.
- Information for parents 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. On review of the journals, it was evident that each child's story and journey was documented to reflect their individual experiences while in the service.
- 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.

- The adults engaged in a positive way to help children find positive solutions to minor issues. Depending on the child's ability they were encouraged to think about their behaviour, the impact it had on others and how to say sorry when they were in the wrong.
- 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.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The 2 playrooms were well equipped with resources and materials suitable to the age and stage of the children attending.
- Opportunities for imaginary and role play were provided in the home corner and dress up area as well as construction area and farm animal areas.
- Fine motor development was supported using jigsaws, pins and threading puzzles.
- Arts and crafts provided opportunities for children to express their creativity. In both playrooms a library equipped with age-appropriate books enhanced language development. All materials were stored on open shelving, ensuring they were accessible to the children throughout the day.
- The outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children. The outdoor area provided 2 different outdoor areas with various resources suitable to the age and stage of the child. These included a polytunnel, tyres, slides, swings, mud kitchens and playhouses. A variety of ride on toys, bikes, trikes and trees which allowed for gross motor skill development. There was also planting areas which provided educational opportunities for the preschool children. The outdoor area also had home-made tents and a fairy garden for imaginary play.

Programme of Activities

- On review of the documentation of the service the core ethos of the services is that they take a holistic approach to each child's learning and development. They work in partnership with parents to enhance each individual child's lifelong learning experience while attending the service.
- Curriculum planning is in place, to support each child's development.
- Each child had a learning journal of the work that they had completed since the start of the year.

- In partnership with parents and guardians a profile was completed of each child prior to commencing in the service.
- Through the programme of activities children had the opportunity to interact in small and large groups and were given the opportunity and encouraged by adults to take the lead and engage with their peers.
- Adults created an environment for easy transitions throughout the day. All transitions during the day involved the children, they took an active role in preparing, assisting the adults, deciding their own snack time and tidying up. This in turn promoted each child's independence and leadership skills.
- The service had a programme of activity and curriculum in place to support the individual needs of each child in line with their age and stage of development.
- The activities were observed to be both adult and child led both indoors and outdoors with an emphasis of the children's emerging interests, wellbeing and development.

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:

- Adult only areas were secured from the preschool children during the inspection, the inspectors observed that the adult only areas, office and kitchen doors were closed to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- The main hallway and the fire exit area from the creche room were unobstructed.
- The entrance to the service was secured to prevent unauthorised access and to prevent children exiting the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for 10 adults, however 4 of these vetting disclosures were 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

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

General Safety:

- Four Garda vetting renewals are now on file for the adults for whom they were outstanding. Vetting will be monitored in the future to ensure compliance with the regulations.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Four Garda vetting renewals were received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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) Eight adults had a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and the staff roster indicated that an adult with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available in the service at all times. In addition, 2 staff had further training which included emergency medication administration training.

(2)

(a) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored in the playrooms and office in the service.

(b) The first aid boxes were available in the service for use by the adults during the operational hours of the 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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 by the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on 12 August 2025.
 - (b) Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The date recorded for both was 22 July 2025.
- (2)
- (c) The records were furnished to the inspectors on the premises.
- (4) Fire action notices were displayed at the fire exit points demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service documented evidence of insurance for 44 pre-school children valid until the 27/03/2026.