

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE151
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Castlewarden Montessori & Pre School
-------------------------	--------------------------------------

Address of Service:	Whitegate House, Castlewarden, Straffan, Co. Kildare
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	W23 WD92
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Russell
-------------------------------------	--------------

Service type:	Part Time
----------------------	-----------

Date(s) of Inspection:	27/05/2026
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	25
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co Kildare
Inspection undertaken by:	F Carty
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Castlewarden Montessori and Preschool is located in the rear of the registered provider's home. It operates from two adjoining rooms on the ground floor of a private residence. The service is registered to provide part time care for children aged 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 9am to 2pm and 9.30am to 13.30pm daily. The premises includes ground floor access to sanitary facilities and an outdoor area to the rear.

Staffing

There were three staff present working directly with the children on the inspector's arrival. The registered provider also works with the children but arrived subsequent to the inspector's arrival.

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, information and records, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focussed on the following regulations:

- 9 (1) (a) (b) 2 (a) (b) (c) (d) 4 - Management and recruitment
- 11 (1) (2), (8)(a) - Staffing levels

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- 16 – Record in relation to a preschool service
- 19 (1) (a) - Health, welfare and development of child
- 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child
- 25 – First Aid
- 26 – Fire Safety

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 information and records.

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, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

(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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and remained present for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) The recruitment records for four staff were reviewed on inspection and met compliance as follows:
- (a) Five written validated references from a past employer were available.
 - (b) Three written validated references from a reputable source were available.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all four adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.
 - (d) International Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(4) Documentation was available to show that all adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)
On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs. There were four adults available to facilitate the care and education of 25 children on the day of inspection.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults was maintained at all times.

(8)(a)
The roster demonstrated that there were two adults on the premises at all times.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

- (h) The attendance of the preschool children was recorded as they arrived and left the service.
- (i) There was a staff roster in place which reflected the staffing levels on the day of inspection.
- (k) A sample of four accident and incident records were reviewed. All the required details and signatures were recorded.

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*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

On the day of inspection due to the favourable weather the children spent the entire morning outside in the garden.

The parents and guardians of the children provided all snacks for the children which included a variety of foods including sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts. Staff used lunchtime as an opportunity to promote independence. For

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

example, children were encouraged to retrieve and manage their own lunch boxes with support provided if required. Children were observed to use the toilet independently and any child who required assistance with toileting or hand washing was supported when needed. Children were prompted to wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Water was available for children to access at all times. Staff encouraged children to put on hats and ensured sun cream was on all children whilst outside.

A number of interest areas were available to the children including large trucks, sand play and a tough tray with sea animals, shells, dyed water was set up to extend the children's learning on the current theme being discussed in the classroom. There was a swing set and ride on toys available and staff managed behaviour by ensuring discussions regarding turn taking and sharing were observed.

On the day of inspection a chick had been born in the service, all children had the opportunity to hold and get a photo of the chick should they wish.

Staff demonstrated strong relationships with children and used spontaneous moments during play to extend children's learning for example staff were observed to discuss at length the under-water theme and the hatching of the chick.

Verbal cues together with a timer were used to signal to children that the end of an activity was approaching. This provided the children with the opportunity to prepare and transition to the next activity in an unhurried manner. Staff demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children, praise was observed to be given to children when they shared and took turns playing with various equipment.

Staff sat with children at lunch time and were observed to actively listen and engage with children's interests promoting positive social interactions.

The indoor environment offered a variety of materials to support children's learning and development. These included items such as, a library with a selection of books supporting early literacy, small world materials such as animals and dolls supported imaginative play, a mark making area encouraged prewriting skills, a well-equipped home corner. Child size furniture was available to support children's comfort and independence. The presence of a family wall with photos provided children with a sense of identity and belonging. Room 1 had a variety of Montessori materials available on low level shelving which promoted development in all aspects of the curriculum.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

Appropriate measures had been taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children and staff in attendance as demonstrated below:

General Safety:

Access to the service was secure ensuring no unauthorised access to or from the building. Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children. Heavy furniture was secured and cables were out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled warm water was available to the children along with liquid soap and paper towels. Pedal bins were available throughout the service. The service was maintained in a clean condition. Children were observed to wash their hands prior to snack time and after using the toilet.

Fire Safety:

All emergency exits were kept clear of obstruction and regular monthly fire drills took place.

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)

There was evidence to show that three adults held certification in First Aid Responder training, all adults were available for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and stored safely in an easily accessible and prominent position in a press in the care room and was available to the children at all times

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a)
- A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on 6th May 2026.
- (b)
- The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment on the premises was available. The maintenance records confirmed the most recent service was carried out on 13th March 2026. A record was available to show that the smoke alarms had last been serviced on the 7th March 2026.