

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK002
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Apple Tree Farm Montessori and Afterschool
-------------------------	--

Address of Service:	Grove, Goresbridge, Co. Kilkenny
----------------------------	----------------------------------

Eircode:	R95 KAA4
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Pamela Drennan
-------------------------------------	----------------

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

Date of Inspection:	12/02/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	30
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Apple Tree Farm Montessori and Afterschool is a registered early years service located in rural county Kilkenny near the village of Goresbridge. The service provides full day, part-time and sessional pre-school services to children aged 2 to 6 years between the hours 07:45 to 18:00 hours. The pre-school service operates from a purpose-built natural stone building at the back of the registered provider's private residence. There are three classrooms- the Caterpillar room for children aged 2 to 3 years and the Butterfly room for children aged 3- to 4-year-olds on the ground floor, with adjacent nappy changing and toilet facilities.

On the first floor, a third classroom called the Bird's Nest accommodates the older children from 4-to-5 years, with integrated children's toilets. On the ground floor there is also a designated kitchen area for the preparation of hot meals.

A large natural outdoor play area is located at the back of the building, comprised of a variety of interest areas and a wooden cabin. There is also an enclosed secure area at the front of the building for children to play on ride on toys. There is a designated changing room to store all the children's individual outdoor suits and wellies and where suitable bench seating is provided for them to easily change in and out of their outdoor clothing.

Staffing

There are 13 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider and a chef who also holds a Level 8 qualification in nutrition and exercise.

All staff members who as part of their role in the service is to work directly with the pre-school children, hold qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) 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:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations.

Regulation 15-Record of a Pre-school Child,

Regulation 19- Health Welfare and Development of the Child,

Regulation 23-Safeguarding Health Safety and Welfare of Child,

Regulation 24-Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance,

Regulation 25-First Aid,

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the three classrooms and the natural outdoor play area.

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, and*

(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 named deputy designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(b) The staff roster demonstrated that the designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge, was always onsite while the service was in operation.

(2) Staff files for 13 staff members were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each of the staff members from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for each staff member. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) A police vetting disclosure certificate was available for one staff member employed in the service who had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications were available for inspection, for each staff member, who as part of their role were working directly with the children, demonstrating that each staff member held at least a minimum Level 5 to Level 8 qualification in early childhood care and education on the national QQI Framework.

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.*
- (4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*
- (a) a sessional pre-school service, and*
 - (b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*
- (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) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The registered provider always ensured that there was an adequate number of adults directly caring for the number of pre-school children in the service. During the morning of the service there were 36 children aged 2 to 5 years directly cared for by 9 staff members.
- In the evening there were 30 children directly cared for by 4 staff.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(4)(a)(b) There were 9 adults working directly with the 36 pre-school children aged 2 to 5 years of age throughout the inspection. The adult: child ratios were maintained in each classroom as follows.

The “Caterpillar” classroom- There were 7 children aged 2 to 3 years of age directly cared for by 2 staff members.

The “Butterfly” classroom – There were 10 children aged 3 to 4 years directly cared for by 3 staff members.

The “Bird’s Nest” classroom- There were 19 children directly cared for by 4 staff members.

In the evening 30 children remained in the service with 6 staff members directly supervising them.

(8) In discussion with the designated person in charge and staff present, the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises while the pre-school children were in attendance.

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.*

Compliance Information

On review of a sample of 12 records of pre-school children, the inspector observed that all elements as required

(a) to (i) had been obtained in consultation with parents and were detailed in each child’s record.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

(1)(a) The inspector observed that the service's variety of outdoor play spaces and all three classrooms provided physical environments appropriate to the ages, developmental needs and emergent interests of the children. Children were observed to be very comfortable and familiar with the service transitioning independently to interest areas of their choice indoors and outdoors, engaging in activities that they showed interest in such as transport, diggers and messy construction areas in the outside lay area.

The children confidently decided to go outside when they were ready to, facilitated and appropriately supported by the staff present. The children demonstrated to the inspector their changing room located at the side of the premises where they changed into their outdoor waterproof clothing, wellies and hats. The weather on the day of inspection was damp, misty and cold, however children demonstrated that they were comfortable and confident in knowing they were well protected in their appropriate outdoor clothing, playing outside.

Children who expressed a desire to remain indoors were also facilitated in doing so with staff and children engaged in conversations about what they would like to play with or planned to do while indoors.

Staff were observed to support and promote children with their toileting, always being near to support a child during toilet training and prompting the children to wash their hands afterwards.

Breakfast, dinner and tea were provided for the children onsite and prepared in the service's designated kitchen by the chef who the registered provider explained was especially conscious of the children's nutritional requirements for healthy development. Children brought their morning snack in from home and these snacks were observed to contain healthy food items in line with the service's healthy eating policy which was communicated to parents upon their child's registration at the service. On each day there was a hot vegetarian option available on the menu with all dishes containing the required food groups. Drinking water was accessible for the children in each of the three classrooms, and full fat milk was offered at mealtimes. The evening snack of fruit at 15:00 hours and the evening tea was also provided by the service.

Staff and children sat with each other at mealtimes, chatting amicably about various topics of interest and daily news from home.

On the day of inspection, in the Bird's Nest classroom, a visiting teacher for children with additional hearing needs

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

spoke with the children about deafness, hearing difficulties, the use of hearing aids and cochlear implants. The children in the class were concentrated in absorbing the information and engaged in colouring pictures of cochlear implants supporting their three friends in the class who had hearing aids. The inspector observed several of the children using sign language to thank the visiting teacher and say goodbye and in discussion with the staff, the inspector was informed that all the children had benefited from a sign language teacher visiting a child in the class previously with most of the class learning and remembering a lot of the signs. The children demonstrated a great understanding of their friends in the class who had hearing needs.

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 had a large carpark to the front of the premises which provided adequate space for parents dropping and collecting their child/ children. An enclosed play area with child height fencing and a secured gate was located between the carpark and main building. The main entrance had a keypad call system in operation, whereby staff had to authorise any entry to the service. Large windowpanes at the front of the premises provided staff with a clear overview of any visitors in the carpark.

The large outdoor play area at the back of the building was secured with natural rural boundaries and child height fences which further divided the outdoor area interest areas.

The kitchen is inaccessible to the children and locked when not in use.

All windows at low level are secured, while windows used for natural ventilation have security restrictors in place.

All electrical sockets were observed to be in a good state of repair with socket protectors in place where appropriate.

Infection Control:

The children were provided with appropriate child sized toilet facilities, adequate supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, Both the staff and children were observed to wash their hands before meal and snack times and after toileting, nappy changing, messy or outdoor play.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Administration of Medication:

Child centred plans were available for children with additional medical needs. Medication consent forms were completed in detail in line with the service's administration of medication policy. Staff demonstrated competent knowledge of how to administer emergency, temperature reducing and prescribed medications to any child in line with procedures documented in the service's policy.

Outing:

An adequate outings policy was available for review, which outlined the procedure staff would follow in preparing for any outing away from the service, in consultation with the children's parents/ guardians.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

While Garda Vetting disclosures were available for 13 staff members in the service, the Garda vetting disclosure certificates for 4 staff members were not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN 12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Immediately post inspection we reapplied for the four staff member's renewal of Garda vetting. We will forward same once we have received back.

Going forward we will ensure to keep a data base of Garda vetting renewal dates to ensure all staff have Garda Vetting within the previous three years.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copies of Garda vetting application emails.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliance. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff in each classroom demonstrated to the inspector that each pre-school child's attendance and departure times to and from the service were recorded daily. On review of the attendance records the number of children present in the service correlated with the attendance records maintained by the staff in each of the three classrooms.

(3)(a) The inspector observed that no person other than a child attending the service, a parent/ guardian dropping or collecting a child, an employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises without authorisation by the registered provider or an employee.

(b) The inspector observed that a daily record of any visitors to the service was maintained and detailed the name, contact details, purpose of visit and times of entry and exit from the service. The inspector was required to record the details in the record book upon arriving at the service. A visiting teacher for children with additional needs had also recorded the details of their visit.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 were five staff members employed in the service with current certification in the required first aid responder (FAR) training for children. At all times while the service was operating, the roster demonstrated that an adequate number of staff members with FAR training were present.

(2)(a)(b) A dedicated first aid box was available on the windowsill, on the main corridor of the ground floor and could easily be accessed by staff from all three classrooms.

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.
- (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) The registered provider ensured that the following fire records were maintained.
- (a) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 16 January 2026.
 - (b) A record was maintained of the dates of checking and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and fire alarm system in the service, by a reputable contractor. The last maintenance check for both was recorded as having taken place on the 10 December 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the main hall of the ground floor of the service. An assembly area was clearly signposted in the large carpark at the front of the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a full day care pre-school service for up to 43 preschool children was displayed on the notice board in the service.

The insurance certificate provided cover from 26 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.