

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK014
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Name of Service:	Chez Nous Montessori
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Address of Service:	Cloneen Bridge, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 A5WR
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Name of Registered Provider:	Patricia Byrne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
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Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton.
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Title:	Early Years Inspector.
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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

Chez Nous Montessori is a sessional early childhood care and education (ECCE) service located in the rural area of Cloneen, in north county Kilkenny. The service operates from a purpose-built classroom on the property of the registered provider's private residence. An ECCE session is provided for children aged 2 years and 8 months to 6 years. The service operates from 09:30 to 12:30 hours, Monday to Friday, for 38 weeks of the school calendar year.

There is a secure outdoor play area adjacent to the service and the registered provider has recently installed a separate road entrance and car park for the service.

Staffing

The registered provider and an employed staff member work directly with the children in attendance at the service. A recruitment process is currently in process to employ relief staff for the service.

Both the registered provider and employee hold qualifications in early childhood care and education at Level 5 and Level 6 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:

- 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 10-Policies, Procedures, etc. of Pre-School Service,

Regulation 15- Record of a Preschool Child,

Regulation 21-Equipment and Materials,

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of child,

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the classroom and 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, staff member 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

(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 on the day of inspection and the second staff member who was also present, was able to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was onsite throughout the inspection.

(2) The registered provider's file and staff file for the staff member employed to work directly with the children were reviewed by the inspector and the following observations found.

(a)(b) There were two validated references available for both the registered provider and for the staff member on file, from either a past employer or reputable source in the case of a person who had no past employers.

(c) Garda Vetting certificates were available on file for both the registered provider and staff member.

The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) No staff member working in the service had lived outside of the State for a period of six months or longer.

(4) Certificates of accredited qualifications were available in each of the two files demonstrating that the registered provider and staff member, each held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the national framework of qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

A sample of the written policies, procedures and statements required under schedule 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 were available in the service and reviewed by the inspector. The following policies were reviewed, Statement of Purpose and Function, Complaints policy, Administration of Medication policy, Infection Control policy, policy on Managing Behaviour, Outings policy, policy on Accidents and Incidents, Healthy Eating policy and Staff Training policy. The policies reviewed were observed to be specific to the service and their contents were adequate.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) On review of the staff roster, the registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children in their care.

(3) There were 19 early years children aged 3 to 5 years of age, present with 2 staff members directly supervising them.

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

(1)(a) to (i) On review of a sample of 12 records of pre-school children, the inspector observed that records of the particulars (a) to (i) were maintained for each preschool child.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The inspector observed that age-appropriate furniture, play and work equipment and materials were provided in the service. Children sat on comfortable appropriate child seating at the correct level tables suitable to their needs.

Children had access to age appropriate and clear identifiable areas of interest, which included a kitchen area, art and creativity corner, rest and reading area and a music stand. Low-level shelving provided the children with access to a range of Montessori equipment, tabletop activities, small world vehicles and figurines, manipulative and connective blocks and bricks and sensory resources.

The fire exit door led directly onto a spacious outdoor grass area which also contained a variety of interest areas to encourage the children’s physical activities, exploring and imaginary play. The area was adequately secured with a five-foot wooden fence surrounding the perimeter. A swing set, playhouse, ride on toys and outdoor kitchen area provided the children with stimulating areas of play to develop their imagination and provided physical challenges.

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 entrance to the front area of the service was appropriately secured with a call bell system which staff answered ensuring that no unauthorised person could enter the service and reducing the risk of any child exiting the service unsupervised.

The outdoor area was secured with a five-foot-high wooden fence and a bolted gate which the staff also monitored and prevented children exiting the area unsupervised.

Cleaning materials and equipment were stored appropriately in a secure storage area inaccessible to the children.

Infection Control:

Staff and children were observed to adhere to the service's infection control policy with handwashing observed after toileting, messy play and outdoor play and prior to snack time.

Cleaning schedules that were provided to the inspector, demonstrated that staff carried out regular cleaning and maintenance of the physical environment and play equipment both indoors and outdoors.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that medications were not generally required to be administered in the service, however the inspector observed that there was an administration of medication policy in place, if a child required administration of an anti-febrile medication or where a child in attendance at the service required the administration of a specific medication.

Staff were familiar with the procedure required to administer any medication and how to develop a child centre plan for the administration of any emergency medication.

Outing:

At the time of inspection, the service did not operate outings away from the service.

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) On review of the staff files, the inspector observed that there was one staff member employed in the service with current first aid responder (FAR) training. The second staff member's FAR certification had recently expired, and the staff member was on a waiting list for refresher training.

(2)(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available stored on a high shelf in the classroom and was always available to the children in attendance in 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.

(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) On review of fire drill records maintained, the inspector observed that fire drills were carried out monthly in the service.

(b) Records were also available demonstrating that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the service were last serviced in March 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed on the main entrance door and beside the fire exit door.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

On review of the service's current insurance certificate, the inspector observed that the insurance certificate detailed cover for a sessional childcare service for 22 children.