

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK035
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Name of Service:	Head Start Montessori
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Address of Service:	69 Springfield, Waterford Road, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 K6HP
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lynn Finnegan
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	16/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	N/A
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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
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Description of service

Head Start Montessori is a part-time early years service in Kilkenny City. The service provides a sessional Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) service and the option of a part-time service to children aged 2 to 6 years of age between the hours of 08:00 to 13:00 or 09:00 to 14:00 hours. The ECCE session is from 09:30 to 12:30 hours Monday to Friday from September to June as per the school calendar year.

Staffing

There were four staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. All staff members employed in the service held qualifications in early childhood care and education 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:

- 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.

The inspection focused on assessment of compliance under the following regulations 9, 10, 11, 15, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 15 and 20. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the classroom on the day of inspection.

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 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.*

(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 registered provider who was also the designated person in charge was onsite on the inspector's arrival at the service and for the duration of the inspection.
- (b) The staff roster that was provided to the inspector demonstrated that there was always the registered provider/designated person in charge or a named deputy designated person in charge onsite while the service was in operation.
- (c) A clearly documented outline of the management of the structure in the service was displayed at the entrance of the service, identifying the lines of authority, accountability, the roles, and responsibilities of individual staff members in the service.
- (2) Staff files for the four staff members including the registered provider, currently employed in the service were reviewed by the inspector. It is acknowledged that recruitment for a fifth staff member was in process.
- (a)(b) Two validated references were available on file for each staff member, from either a past employer or from a reputable source.
- (c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file, for each staff member employed in the service, including the registered provider. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required as no staff member employed in the service had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.
- (4) Certificates of qualifications were available 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 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

On review of the service's policies the inspector was assured that the registered provider ensured that all required documents specified in Schedule 5, were available in the service and were communicated to the staff as part of their induction process on commencing employment in the service, with annual reviews and revisions taking place as appropriate.

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.

(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) (1) Throughout the inspection, there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(4)(a)(b) The following adult to child ratio was observed in operation during the sessional and part-time service. There were 24 children aged 3 to 5 years of age directly cared for by 4 qualified staff members.

(8)(a) On review of the staff roster and in discussion with the registered provider and staff present, the inspector was assured that there were always at least two adults on the premises while children were in attendance in the service.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) On review of a sample of 12 pre-school children's records, the inspector observed that particulars (a) to (j) as required by regulation 15 were clearly recorded.

(3) The registered provider demonstrated how preschool records are stored securely onsite and were available for inspection by parents/ guardians and authorised persons.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(2) A registered provider-

(b) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that moves premises on or after 30 June 2016,

shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service provided a suitable physical environment for the children to learn and play in. The classroom was comprised of age-appropriate interest areas, art and creativity areas, sensory areas, interest tables and shelves with educational materials and learning resources.

(b) A quiet soft designed sensory area provided an appropriate environment for children attending the part-time service to use as a sleep area if required. Appropriate sleep mats and bed linen were available for children to sleep on if required.

(2)(b) There was an outdoor play area provided directly adjacent to the childcare building which could be directly accessed from the classroom. The outdoor area was secured within a child height red wooden and provided a covered area so children could go outside during wet weather. The area provided opportunities for physical play and development of motor skills with climbing opportunities on large tyres, activity centres and ride on toys. An outdoor mud kitchen area and gardening equipment were also provided.

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 was in a secured position at the back of the registered provider's private residence. The seven-foot-high side entrance gate was secured with a call bell and keypad system so staff could assess any visitors to the service. Internally the outdoor play area integrated into the registered provider's back yard was secured with a child height red fence, which could be directly accessed from both doors of the classroom. These elements helped mitigate against any unauthorised persons from entering the service and reduced the risk of any child leaving the service unsupervised.

Administration of Medication:

The service had an adequate administration of medication policy in place. While no child attending the service at the time of inspection required medications, the registered provider and staff demonstrated an adequate knowledge of the procedures to be followed in the event of a child requiring prescribed medication, emergency medication or anti-febrile medication.

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.

(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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) On review of records maintained and in discussion with the staff and registered provider, the inspector was reassured that each child attending the service has their time of arrival to the service and departure time from the service recorded daily.

(3)(a) The registered provider and staff ensured that no person other than a pre-school child, person dropping or collecting a child, an employee or unpaid worker could enter the premises unauthorised.

(b) A daily record of any visitors to the service was maintained and the inspector was requested to ensure that they recorded the details of their inspection visit.

(4) The registered provider demonstrated that the records were retained for a period of at least one year.

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 two 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 a staff member with FAR training was onsite.

(2)(a)(b) A dedicated first aid bag was available on an accessible shelf for staff on a wall hook. Records demonstrated that its contents were checked monthly and replaced if necessary.

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 following 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 30 September 2025.
 - (b) The registered provider maintained a record of the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The last maintenance check for the fire-fighting equipment was recorded as having taken place on the 07 October 2025 and for the smoke alarm system was recorded as having taken place on 28 November 2024.
- (4) The registered provider ensured that a fire procedure notice was clearly displayed in the main entrance area.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was a current insurance certificate for the service available for inspection.

The insurance certificate detailed insurance cover for a part-time childcare service for a maximum of 26 early years children and covered the period from 28 November 2024 to 27 November 2025.