

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK041		
Name of Service:	Kidstuff Montessori Preschool		
Address of Service:	Blanchvilles Park, Clifden, Co. Kilkenny		
Eircode:	R95 XV00		
Name of Registered Provider:	Annette Nolan		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	08/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and 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

Kidstuff Montessori Preschool is a registered sessional early years service that caters for children aged 2 to 6 years, between the hours of 09:00 to 12:00, Monday to Friday as per the early childhood care and education (ECCE) scheme year. The service is in the rural area of Clifden in north county Kilkenny.

A spacious grass outdoor play area can be directly accessed from the classroom.

Since the pandemic, the service has transitioned to operate a fully outdoor service, having further developed its outdoor area with a range of interest areas and a sheltered classroom adjacent to the main building.

Staffing

There were five staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. All five staff members, who as part of their role in the service work directly with the children in attendance held qualification in early childhood care and education ranging from Level 5 to 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.

The inspection focused on assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 15, 21, 23, 25, 26 and 28. Regulation 30, Minimum Space Requirements was included in the inspection on the request of the registered provider.

A sampling process was used under regulations 10, 15 and 21. The scope of the inspection included the outdoor area, and the classroom in the building.

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.

(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 there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) Both the registered provider and deputy designated person in charge were onsite during the inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place which was observed by the inspector.

(2) Staff files for five staff members employed to work directly with the children as part of their role in the service were reviewed by the inspector and the following observations found.

(a)(b) There were two validated references available in each staff member's 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 each staff member working directly with the children. The registered provider demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) A police vetting certificate was available on file for one staff member who 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 five staff members' files demonstrating that each staff member 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

On review of documentation the inspector observed that the following sample of 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 open for inspection.

Policy on Administration of Medication,

Policy On Infection Control,

Fire Safety Policy,

Policy on Accidents and Incidents,

Policy on Authorisation to Collect Children,

Policy on Staff Absences,

Policy on the Use of the Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices,

Recruitment Policy, and

Staff Training Policy.

The service policies inspected were specific to the service and their contents observed to be 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) There was an adequate number of qualified staff members directly caring for the children throughout the inspection.

(3) There were 18 early years children aged 3 to 5 years of age, present with 3 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 the registered provider and staff, in the development of the outdoor had provided the children with several identifiable interest areas, which were observed to be supplemented with appropriate themed instruments and play equipment.

On entry to the service a large, covered veranda that extended from the permanent building, provided the children with an outdoor classroom, where appropriate and an adequate number of tables and chairs were placed. An outdoor handwash basin provided warm running water for the children to wash their hands throughout the session as they engaged in the various outdoor activities and a lot of messy play. Liquid hand soap and paper towelling was also provided adjacent to the outdoor handwash basin.

Various areas of interest provided physical challenge such as a climbing frame, wooden benches, planks and blocks were provided for the children, which the children climbed and balanced on but also used as seating at circle time.

A wooden triangular structure provided a quiet sensory rest area with soft floor mats and cushions placed inside. Coloured prisms inserted in the wooden structure encouraged coloured rays of light through. Children were eager to demonstrate to the inspector how the skin on their hands and arms reflected the coloured light, saying “Look I’ll show you how it works, your hand is blue!”

From here the outdoor area meandered off into two different sections. The two sides were divided by a wooden fence. Children wandered independently from area to area becoming engaged in the activity of their choice.

On one side there was a wonky wooden house which provided wooden building materials and soft bricks, a large willow area, which children has manipulated into a structure and which the children were involved in cutting back in December or January.

A large outdoor mud kitchen area was well resourced with pots, pans, plates and cups. One child told the inspector “I’m making dinner for you” as the child stirred a pot of mud with great enthusiasm, “What would you like for dessert”.

Further down this side of the outdoor area three large growing beds were provided, with a little stone shed at the bottom for the storage of all the children’s gardening equipment. Children demonstrated how they used their

tools, while on occasion unearthing the stray potato that had avoided picking in the summer months. Wheelbarrows were used to transfer soil back and forth. A robin cheekily rested on the fence and on occasion tried to rest on the children's shovel handles. The children were totally at ease with this and showed the inspector where they thought the robin had made its nest in the little gardening shed. This section of the play area also contained a small world area and a music wall. Across the wooden fence, the outdoor area had a wide clear grass area with structured rolling hills, which had crawling tunnels in them, an upside-down boat shaped wooden green house, in which children grew tomatoes, strawberries, flowers and clearly labelled edible plants. The children were very clear in informing the inspector what plants could be eaten. A natural paved path led the way to a large wooden house at the end of the garden which had been designed by the children as a home. Children at the table having imaginary tea and a chat, while their dolls or teddies rested in the buggies or prams provided. The inspector observed that apart from accessing the toilet facilities located just inside the entrance door of the permanent classroom, only on occasion did a child go inside to get a toy to bring outside. There were adequate and appropriate resources provide outdoors to meet the needs of the children.

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 staff files the inspector observed that there was currently one staff employed in the service with current first aid responder (FAR) training. This staff member was rostered to be present daily and available to the children attending the service. It is acknowledged that a second staff member whose FAR accreditation had expired was registered on a waiting list for FAR training.

(2)(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available stored on a 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (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) On review of fire drill records maintained the inspector observed that while the service was in operation from September to June, monthly fire drills are carried out, gathering the children at the fire assembly point. The last fire drill recorded as having taken place was on the 17 October 2024.
- (b) Records were also available demonstrating that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the service were last serviced on 23 January 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed next to the entrance of the classroom.

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, clearly displayed on the notice board in the classroom, the inspector observed that the insurance certificate detailed cover for a sessional childcare service for 22 children for the period from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) There was adequate and clear space provided in the permanent classroom for the children attending the service. A total of 51.85 square metres was available in the two classrooms provided within the service's permanent building structure.

(3) While the 18 children attending the service on the day of inspection were observed to spend all their time outdoors, there was ample space above the minimum of 1.818 square metres available for each child attending the service.