

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

|                                     |                                      |    |      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----|------|
| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>            | TU2015LD015                          |    |      |
| <b>Name of Service:</b>             | Bluebells Montessori Nursery School  |    |      |
| <b>Address of Service:</b>          | 2 Park Close, Longford, Co. Longford |    |      |
| <b>Eircode:</b>                     | N39 RW92                             |    |      |
| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Brenda McGuinness                    |    |      |
| <b>Service type:</b>                | Sessional                            |    |      |
| <b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>       | 26/09/2024                           |    |      |
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b>   | AM                                   | 18 | PM 4 |

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Early Year's Inspectorate,<br>TUSLA, Child and Family Agency,<br>Government buildings,<br>Convent road,<br>Roscommon town<br>Co Roscommon. |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>                | A. Kennedy                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Title:</b>                                   | 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

### Description of service

This service was established in 2000 as a privately operated childcare service. It is registered to operate two preschool sessions from 9:30hrs to 12:30hrs and 13:00hrs to 16:00hrs. It caters for children from 2 to 6 years and it can cater for 22 children within each session. It operates for 38 weeks per year. The service is located on the ground floor of a purpose-built premises and is within close proximity of the registered providers main dwelling. The service consists of a large preschool room, sanitary accommodation, office space and a kitchen. An outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider was the designated person in charge on the day of the inspection>There is also a deputy person in charge in her absence. Four adults are employed within the service-three adults work in the morning session and two adults work in the afternoon session. A relief arrangement is in place in event of staff absence. All staff working with the children had completed training at level 5, to level 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

(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 and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

The staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises, at all times when pre-school children were present.

(2) The vetting files for four staff were reviewed and the vetting for one person who attends to provide music sessions was also reviewed.

(a) & (b) 10 of the 10 validated references on file in respect of the staff were from a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures for four adults employed in the service and the person who attends to provide the music session were on file.

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

(d) Police vetting was on file for three staff who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of 6 months as an adult.

(4) The four staff working directly with the children, had evidence of a childcare qualification to at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education from level 5 to level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### 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 the day of the inspection, there were three adults working directly with eighteen children in the morning session and two adults were working with four children in the afternoon session.

The children were aged between two to five years old.

(3) The appropriate adult/child ratios were maintained throughout the inspection.

### 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 preschool service having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

### Compliance Information

(1)(a) Children had plenty of opportunities to move freely to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.

- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.  
For example:
  - assigning a key person to each child;
  - showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust;
  - being actively involved in children’s play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining when invited to by children);
  - behaving in a way that creates a positive atmosphere (having frequent social conversations, laughter and showing affection);
  - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language;
  - encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking, nurturing and comforting children.
  - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- Visual aids (picture and word reminders) and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning.
- Displayed on the walls were posters, visual aids, photographs, artwork, and themes including the children’s art displays, children’s interest notice board, the weekly planner, posters on teddy bears as gaeilge, nursery rhymes colours “our family tree” and the daily routine.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging, while in the service.
- The service provided parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child, for example, verbal communication at drop of and collection times.
- A newsletter is provided for parent information with details on suggestions for healthy lunches, a reminder to ensure the children are provided with a change of clothes in the service and an invitation for the parent to attend the service to read a story to the group or share a skill with the preschool children.

- Staff adjusted the level of support provided to children depending on the child’s abilities, allowing for children’s partial participation and participation with support.
- The children were observed upon arrival at play in the outdoor area which was equipped with a varied selection of play materials with three sheltered play areas to include a kitchen area with play accessories, picnic tables, a wall mounted chalk board, water and sand play area, a shop area, a planting area and an additional sheltered play area equipped with a climbing frame, hula hoops, a selection of balls and balancing beams and tyre play.
- They then proceeded to come indoors, wash their hands and do tabletop activities including jigsaws, puzzles, magnetic play, peg boards and pegs, sorting shapes and play in the home area with a selection of dolls and accessories and playing with accessories in the doll’s house.
- The children were observed in the construction area playing with blocks, a trainset and garages with play accessories to include trucks, trains, cars and helicopters.
- The staff listened to children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times.
- The staff acknowledged and accepted children’s feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children’s actions and other’s responses. The children were given choice on what to do next.
- Children’s behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner by the staff. It was observed that minor problems were handled promptly and positively by the staff.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children’s inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child’s engagement in an activity ‘that is great’ ‘well done’ and used questions such as ‘what should we do next?’, ‘is there any other way to do this?’, to allow children to critically think and explore.

(b)

- The snacks were supplied by the parents and consisted of a selection of sandwiches with various fillings, rolls, rice cakes, wraps and crackers. The children also had a selection of cheeses and fruits to include strawberries, apples, grapes and banana with milk and water to drink.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The foods provided complied with the service’s healthy eating policy. Healthy eating was promoted within the service.
- The children chatted freely about what foods they liked and disliked.
- Drinking water was available for the children in the room and was accessible by the children throughout the session.

- On the day of the inspection, the children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their level of independence.
- The staff guided and supported children who needed additional help.
- The staff supervised children's hand washing before and after snack time, after toileting, after blowing their noses, after messy play and at drop off and collection times.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilets.
- The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax in a designated cosy area in the playroom.

### 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:

- Cleaning products were securely stored out of child reach.
- Toys and play equipment and materials were developmentally appropriate, kept in good repair and did not pose an injury risk to children.
- The designated emergency exit doors were observed to be clear and unobstructed.
- The main entrance into the preschool room was secured during the sessions.
- The kitchen and office door were secured with a high-level lock to prevent children accessing potential danger.
- Thermostatically controlled hot water was available for use by the children to facilitate safe and hygienic hand washing with a temperature reading of 38°C. The water in the sanitary areas was thermostatically controlled to ensure effective hand washing.
- The blind cord was secured to prevent risk of injury.
- Accurate records of attendance of children and adults in the service were kept by the adults on the day.
- Waste disposal facilities were inaccessible to the preschool children.
- There were no trailing flexes in the service.

- The service had a risk assessment system for checking that toys and equipment were not broken, in a clean condition and maintained in a good state of repair.
- The person in charge clearly identified to the early years' inspector, the drop off and collection procedures for children.

### Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and disposable paper hand towels. During the inspection, children were observed washing their hands after toileting, messy play activities, after outdoor play and before consuming food.
- Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break.
- The adults were observed regularly washing their hands including after disposing of tissues into bins.
- Fixtures, fittings, toys and play resources were observed to be in a clean and hygienic condition with cleaning records maintained.
- A refrigerator was provided for the storage of perishable foods.
- Foot pedal operated lidded bins were provided in the service for the disposal of waste.

### Administration of Medication:

- There were no medications administered to children on the day of the inspection.
- The adult's demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to administration of medication.

### Fire Safety:

- Records on file demonstrated that fire drills were carried out frequently which helped to ensure that adults and children were familiar with the procedure in the event of an actual fire.
- All exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the inspection.

### 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) The service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff members had current training in first aid for children.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position. An additional first aid box was also provided in the outdoor play area.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped and available to the children attending the 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 firefighting 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) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 24th of September 2024.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the last service dated November 2023 and the smoke and fire detection alarm system with the annual service dated 19th of August 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the preschool room.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 27/11/2024 covered 22 children and included the additional session and the following,

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- outings undertaken as part of the service