

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK017
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Name of Service:	Ballykennedy Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Ballykennedy South, Ballingarry, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 ERV0
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aine O'Connor
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Service type:	Sessional, Childminder
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Date of Inspection:	09/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	5
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Offices, 2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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

Ballykennedy Montessori school provides a sessional preschool service each morning from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, Monday to Friday. It also offers a child-minding service each afternoon up to 5.30pm for a maximum of 5 preschool children. The morning sessional service operates from a well-designed purpose-built preschool room adjacent to the registered provider's home. An outdoor play facility is available to the rear of the premises. The child-minding service is operated each afternoon from the registered provider's home.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and the manager of the preschool service. There are two additional staff employed to work each morning at the sessional service. All staff have the required qualification in Early Years Care and Education. Each staff member engages in ongoing professional development, undertaking courses in first aid, child safeguarding training and training programs for the inclusion of children with additional needs in the service.

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/premises and facilities. 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 on the day of the inspection and there was a named person who could deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a) There were written references, from past employers, available in respect of each staff working at the service.

(b) All references were sourced from previous employers.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were available in respect of each staff working at the service. All were dated within the last three years.

(d) No police vetting was required as none of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction.

(4) Each staff working at the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(b) a childminder shall ensure that a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the childminder in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the childminder in the event of an emergency, and

Compliance Information

(1) The service operates a morning sessional programme from 9.30am to 12.30pm. The service offers a child-minding service each afternoon for 5 preschool children up until 5:30pm. On the day of the inspection there were 17 pre-school children present with 3 staff for the morning sessional service. There were 5 preschool children present in the afternoon for the childminding service. The adult child ratio was compliant with the requirements of Regulation 11.

(3) At all times the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.

(8)(b) The registered provider ensured that during the hours of operation of the childminding service, there was a second person within close distance of the service and familiar with the service, available to attend to assist in the event of an emergency.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 12 - Childminders

(1) A childminder shall ensure that-

- (a) there are no more than 5 pre-school children in his or her care at any given time, including his or her own pre-school children,
- (b) subject to paragraph (2), there are no more than 2 children under the age of 15 months in his or her care at any given time, including his or her own pre-school children, and
- (c) there is a working telephone on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The registered provider ensures that there are no more than 5 preschool children in her care each afternoon during the hours of operation of her childminding service.
- (b) All children attending the service were over two and a half years of age.
- (c) A working telephone was always available to the childminder on the premises.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service. Parents provided children with a healthy snack and drinks each day for their lunch. At break times children were observed eating a variety of sandwiches, fruits, crackers, yogurts, and cheese. All perishable foods were stored in a refrigerator until required each morning. Each afternoon the registered provider prepared and cooked a hot nutritious meal for the children who remained at the service until 5:30 pm.

Children had unrestricted access to the toilets located next to the pre-school room. Low level sinks, hot water, liquid soap and hand dryers were accessible to promote hygienic washing of hands. Foot pedal operated, lidded bins were provided for the safe disposal of all waste.

A large soft couch was accessible in the library corner providing the children with a space to rest when tired or sit comfortably when reading.

Children spend long periods outside each day in a well-resourced outdoor play area to the rear of the premises. A sheltered area outside provided the children with a space to play outdoors when the weather was wet.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The sessional service operated from a large well-resourced preschool room. Low level, open shelving units were available around the room with lots of appropriate toys and play materials on display. Lots of posters displayed on the walls of the room promoted learning opportunities for the children. A “Map of the World” with flash cards displaying greetings in different languages promoted inclusivity at the service. A poster titled “When I grow up” displayed pictures of various people who contribute to community life ,e.g., a nurse, a fire worker, a teacher, a truck driver, a mechanic, and a doctor. “Our Community” notice board displayed pictures of the buildings in the local parish which provide service to community, e.g., the local church, the school, the shop, the post office, restaurants along with historical buildings. Children’s artwork was displayed around the room displaying works completed on the theme of autumn. A family wall displayed lots of pictures of each child’s family. Labeled coat hooks and pigeonholes provided a space for children to store their personal belongings in an organised fashion. This helped promote a sense of independence for all children.

The outdoor play area available at the rear of the premises was a well-resourced safe enclosed space. A large cement yard was available for children to use their ride on toys, tricycles, and balanced bikes. A grassed area was accessible for ball games. A large slide was accessible in the sheltered area. A large shed was used for the safe storage of all outdoor play equipment. Children were supervised at all times while playing outdoors. The indoor and the outdoor areas was continuously reviewed, changed, and enhanced to suit the children’s ever-changing interests, capabilities and preferences, along with the themes and curriculum plans of the service.

Each afternoon 5 preschool children moved into the registered provider’s private home. Here a designated playroom with soft couches, comfortable rest areas, and suitable toys and materials were readily accessible. Here the children experienced a home from home environment each evening.

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 registered provider who was available on the premises at all times during the operational hours of the service, had completed a First Aid Responder training course. A refresher first aid course was scheduled to be completed by the registered provider.
- (2) (a) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was stored within easy reach of the staff in the preschool room.
- (b) The first aid box was always available for use.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had an up-to-date insurance certificate available for inspection. The policy covered 22 preschool children to attend the service. The commencement date of the insurance policy was the 28th of March 2024 and the expiry date for cover was the 27th of March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The front door was locked and all who entered the building were checked in by a member of staff. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, wash hand basins and nappy changing areas available in the service.