

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK177
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Name of Service:	The Old School House Montessori
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Address of Service:	Old School House Ballyclough Co Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 Y8W7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Niamh Faulkner
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	01/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	4
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2 nd floor Estuary House Henry Street Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	J Ryan
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

This privately owned sessional service was established in 2001. It provides care and education to children aged 2 years to 6 years. Two sessional services are provided from 08.45 – 11.45 hrs and from 12.00 – 15.00hrs Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The service is based in a rural area and a maximum of 22 children can attend at any one time. Facilities for outdoor play are provided and children spend time outdoors every day.

Staffing

The registered provider and two additional staff work in the service each day. All staff working in the service have childcare qualifications.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,23,25,26 and 28.

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.*

(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 person in charge in the service and a second staff member was available to deputise.

(b) The registered provider was on the premises when the inspector arrived at the service.

(2)(a) Two written references from past employers were available for all three staff present and had been checked on previous inspections of the service.

(b) Written and verified references from sources other than past employers were not required.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all three staff and two of the three disclosures were dated within the last 3 years.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived in another state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The three staff present had childcare qualifications.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) There were 20 pre-school children aged 3 – 5 years being supervised by 3 adults for the morning session and there were 4 pre-school children aged 3 – 5 years being supervised by 3 adults for the afternoon session.

The recommended adult/child ratio of 1:11 was maintained for both sessions.

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

(1)(a) BASIC NEEDS

Parents provided snacks for the children who attended in line with the healthy eating policy of the service, these included fruit, sandwiches, crackers and yogurts. There was a fridge available for the storage of perishable foods and drinks prior to their consumption. On the day of the inspection children were observed to eat their snacks outside seated at tables in a sheltered area.

All children were toilet trained and toileted independently with assistance given where it was required.

Children were observed to wash their hands at appropriate times during the sessions such as after toileting and before eating. Hand washing took place using hot water, liquid soap and paper towels.

The children could rest as desired throughout the morning and afternoon on the child sized couch in the library area. The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the room. Children were supported and encouraged to behave appropriately for their age and stage of development through having simple rules to follow and a wide level of choice of activities. The adult modelled positive behaviour for the children and they were praised for their good behaviour.

Staff were observed to be kind, caring, calm in all her interactions with the children and used positive language.

Parents were made welcome in the service at collection times during which they had the opportunity to share information about their child and their day. The children were observed to put on their coats independently when they were going home. The curriculum was based on children's emergent interests as detailed on the wall posters.

Children were observed to work in small groups at different activities on floor mats on the floor or alternatively doing tabletop activities.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

This sessional service was operated from an old schoolhouse in a rural area. The children had access to one room, sanitary accommodation area and an outdoor play area. The room was well resourced with a wide range of equipment, including real items, natural and sensory material and a library area. Materials were rotated according to the learning needs of children in the group. Defined interest areas included practical life, cultural area, mathematical, science, history, geography and language areas.

The outdoor play area was an enclosed, safe, secure area at the rear of the premises with a grass surface.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The garda vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the last three years as per the regulatory notice, EYI-RN12.3 renewal of garda vetting, published by the inspectorate in September 2023, and effective from Jan 01/01/2024.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider submitted a vetting application for the staff member and is awaiting garda clearance. This documentation will be forwarded to the relevant persons as soon as possible.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

The registered provider will apply for garda vetting every 3 years for all staff members.

Summary Comment

The actions as stated by the registered provider have met the regulatory requirements of regulation 23 as the garda vetting has been updated and forwarded to the early years inspectorate.

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) Two staff had up to date training in First Aid Responder (FAR).

(2) (a) The first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible position in the playroom.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

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) The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place in September 2024.

(b) The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently in October 2024 and a record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available for the number of children who attended and had an expiry date of 27/11/2024.