

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK189			
Name of Service:	Tree Tops Montessori Pre-school			
Address of Service:	Sunglen, Old Pallas, Pallasgreen, Co. Limerick			
Eircode:	V94 EF43			
Name of Registered Provider:	Tracey Hourigan			
Service type:	Full Day Care			
Date of Inspection:	18/09/2023			
No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	16
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate 2nd 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

Tree Tops Montessori school is a privately owned, full day care pre-school service. It operates from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. It provides a breakfast club each morning at 8am and an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme from 9.00am to 12.30pm. A service for school aged children is provided each evening. The service operates from a purpose-built premises. It has 3 pre-school rooms, a kitchen and a manager's office. There are sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities located adjacent to the rooms. The childcare rooms open directly onto a well-resourced outdoor play area located to the side, front and back of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge. There are 10 staff employed at the service which includes the registered provider and kitchen staff. All staff have the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education. Staff engage regularly in ongoing training and professional development.

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 the child. 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.

Additional Information

The inspection took place following information received to the Early Years Inspectorate.

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) On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge of operating the service and there was a named person available who was able to deputise as required.

(b) During the period of the inspection the person in charge was available at all times. The staff roster indicated that either the registered provider or the deputy manager were always accessible on site

(2)(a) Two written and validated references from past employers were available for all staff.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from reputable sources available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff employed at the service.

(d) Police vetting was not required for any staff member employed in the service.

(4) All adults working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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.

Compliance Information

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 39 pre-school children and 9 adults on the premises for the morning sessional service. In the afternoon there were 16 preschool children present with 3 staff. At all times the written staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in all areas of the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(k) Details of any accident or injury to a preschool child were recorded on the accident and incident book. Records indicated that parents were informed of any accident or incident pertaining to their child in a timely manner by the registered provider.

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:

Healthy eating was promoted in the service. Nutritious hot meals and snacks were prepared fresh and served to the children throughout the day. Breakfast if required, lunch, dinner and an afternoon snack were served to the children who attended for the full day care service. Drinking water and cups were accessible to children in each of the rooms.

Sanitary accommodation and nappy changing facilities were located next to the preschool rooms. Nappy changing supplies were within arm's reach of the changing unit. The privacy and dignity of each child was respected at all times in this area of the service. Each room had a supply of tissues and wipes within easy reach of the children. Lidded bins were accessible for the safe disposal of waste.

Rest areas with soft furnishings were accessible in each of the rooms. Staff throughout the service encouraged quiet periods during the day to facilitate each child's need for comfort, rest and relaxation. Stackable beds were available for children who required a sleep at the service. The children had regular change of environment and spent long periods of time in the outdoors each day.

A sheltered area was provided outside for the children allowing them to access the playground in all weather. A natural garden space outside area facilitated a space for fun and exploration.

Staff were observed to interact very well with all the children in their care, speaking in low tones of voice, responding to the children and allowing them plenty of choice relating to playing, games and outdoor activities.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical and the material environments of each room in the service was carefully planned and designed with activities which were aimed at developing social, emotional, cognitive, physical and interactive skills. There were well developed interest areas in each room with construction play, imaginative play, messy play and sensorial play activities facilitated. Soft comfortable seating was available close to each library area. Toys and equipment were rotated, and internal spaces and interest areas redesigned depending on each child's preferences, interests and abilities. Natural open ended play materials such as seashells, stones, pebbles and timber blocks were available. Children had opportunities to spend long periods of time outside in all weather conditions. Each outdoor area was an extension of the well-planned indoor area and was linked with the learning that goes on inside. Opportunities to develop gross motor skills were facilitated outdoors on the play equipment and climbing frames in the natural garden. Mud kitchens provided opportunity for imaginative play. Picnic benches, planting areas and ride on toys provided facilities for additional facilities for play.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were observed to be supervised by staff primarily by sight. Children who could use the toilet independently did so with staff located within earshot and nearby. Closer supervision was evident when children played outdoors and while they ate their meals. The layout of each of the rooms also allowed for ease of visual supervision whilst allowing children space to play alone.