

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS007
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Name of Service:	Majella's Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Acragar Cottage, Mountmellick, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 YK23
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Name of Registered Provider:	Majella Fitzpatrick
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn
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).

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Description of service

Majella's Montessori School is a sessional service located in the rural townland of Acragar, in Mountmellick, Co Laois. The premises is a standalone single-story purpose-built building and provides sessional care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years, Monday to Friday between 09:30-12:30pm. The premises consists of two preschool rooms and a kitchen. A separate enclosed outdoor play areas is located at the back of the premises. Car parking and set down is available in the onsite carpark.

Staffing

The registered provider employs three adults to work in the service. The registered provider works directly with the children and facilitated the inspection on 28 May. Two childcare staff were present on the day of inspection and the registered provider.

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,

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1),(3) Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child.

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- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 (1)(a)(b), (4)– Fire Safety.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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-

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- (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)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Four staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted:

(a)

Five written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

Three written validated references were available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. In regard to the four staff members, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six

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consecutive months as an adult.

(4)
Four employed childcare staff members working directly with the pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of 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.

(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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

(3)
The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.
There were 10 children aged between 3-5 years being supervised directly by three adults.

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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 of child

Children brought in a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches brought in from home were observed to contain a variety of sandwiches, rice cakes, muffins, crackers and fresh fruit. Children's drink bottles were readily available in their lunch bags. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversations with each other. Staff with the children and engaged in conversation with the children during snack time. Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary.

Supporting Relationships

Staff members were observed to be respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names and appropriate eye contact was made. A community wall displayed pictures of the local area including photographs of visits from local services and people familiar to the children such as the local GAA team and fire service. The service-maintained craft books for each child with children's artwork and photographs of their activities and learning, which are provided to parents at the end of the year. A birthday wall displayed photographs of the children on their birthday month. A family wall displayed photographs of the children and their families, helping the children feel connected to home.

Information and updates regarding the service are provided to parents at drop off and collection times.

Physical and material environment

The children were observed engaged and involved throughout the session as they chose between activities. Children were observed to enjoy tabletop activities such as building blocks, using magnetic tiles to construct and crafting using scissors and colours. Toys and play equipment were positioned on accessible open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play. Montessori equipment such as wooden cylinder block sets, shape sorters and geometric sets were positioned at child level on open shelves. Children participated in a collaborative modelling dough activity, flattening the dough with rollers and using shape sorters and cutters to make shapes. Staff supported the children to collect leaves from the outdoor

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area to press imprints into their creations. Staff supported language development by engaging the children in discussions regarding their creations.

An outdoor play area was provided at the back of the preschool. Outdoor climbing equipment with a slide, a wooden tee pee, tuff tray with shells and a mud kitchen were available to the children. Outdoor overalls and wellington boots were available for the children to wear during inclement weather.

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:

The entrance door to the pre-school was controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored on shelves out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper towels were available for hand drying. Pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not required to be administered to any child on the day of inspection. The registered provider informed the inspector that no child in the service was on specific medication requiring a care plan.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection. A fire assembly point was located in the garden area near the carpark.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Handwashing practices were inadequate to control the spread of infection as children's hands were not routinely washed. Children were not brought to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks.

Outing:

2. Written Risk Assessments were not recorded prior to outings. This was at variance to the outings policy which stated that a risk assessment will be carried out before an outing takes place.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Hand washing is now part of every transition in the preschool. When the children come to school in the morning, they wash their hands. They also wash their hands before lunch and after playing outside.

Outing:

An outings risk assessment template is now in use in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Outing:

Copy of Risk Assessment template for outings.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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 members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and were available on the premises during the operational hours of the service.

(2)(a)

A suitably equipped first aid box was located in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

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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)

A written record for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 24 April 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and smoke detection system were both serviced on 09 January 2026.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for 22 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2027.