

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LS008		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Claire's Montessori		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Acragar, Mountmellick, Co. Laois		
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 XT22		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Claire Dempsey		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	11/12/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	16	PM NA
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Flynn		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable		

### Description of service

Claire's Montessori is a private sessional service providing care and education to preschool children aged between two and six years old. The preschool operates from a purpose built single story premises to the rear of the registered providers domestic dwelling. The service is located in the rural town of Acragar, Mountmellick, in Co. Laois. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the preschool. The service operates from 09:15 – 12:15pm Monday to Friday. The preschool consists of one large preschool room, a kitchen, office and a small break out room. The outdoor play area is accessed via the back of the preschool. Car parking and set down facilities were available in the car park at the front of the service.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs three staff in the service. There were four adults present on the day of the inspection including the registered provider and three childcare staff. The registered provider works directly with the preschool children and facilitated the inspection on 11 December.

### 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

- Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c),(4),

- Regulation 11– Staffing Levels (1)(3),
- Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(a),
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child,
- Regulation 25 – First Aid (1), (2)(a)(b).
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures (1) (a) (b), (4).
- 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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.

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

(c)

The staff members were aware of the management structure, the lines of authority and their roles within the service.

(2)

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

- (a)  
Three written validated references were available from a previous employer and
- (b)  
Five written validated references were available from a reputable source.
- (c)  
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four 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.
- (4)  
All employed childcare staff members working directly with the preschool 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 sixteen children being cared for by four adults.

### 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a)

##### Basic needs

Children were observed eating toast as a mid-morning snack provided by the staff at 10am. Children brought in a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches brought in from home were observed to contain a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, crackers and 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 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 warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names and appropriate eye contact was made. Children's individual profiles were displayed on the wall and contained photographs of the children with their families and information about each child such as 'what am I good at' and 'things I like'. This helped the children feel connected to home and assist with consistency of care and smooth transitions.

The staff advised the inspector that information and updates regarding the service are provided to parents at drop off and collection times. Additional updates are shared via an electronic messaging application. Parents are invited to attend the preschool Christmas Show at the end of the term.

##### Physical and material environment

Toys and play equipment were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play. Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions, songs and storytelling which were observed on the day of inspection. A range of books were available in the reading area of the preschool room.

Children were observed engaged in tabletop activities such as playing with sand, small vehicles and a tuff tray with dinosaurs. A staff member was at each table engaging with the children and talking about what the children were creating. Seasonal artwork was displayed on the wall including a group art piece of a large Christmas stocking with glitter and cotton wool balls. Each child's name was displayed on the painted and decorated stocking. A large outdoor play area was provided at the back of the preschool and had a range of play equipment for the preschool children such as ride on vehicles, scooters, balance bikes and diggers. Part of the outdoor area was covered with a plastic corrugated roof, which provided for the continuation of outdoor play in 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 preschool was securely locked and 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 out of reach of the children in the kitchen. The door to the kitchen was closed when not in use by staff.

The service had an oil tank in the outdoor play area which was securely fenced off.

Wooden gates and fencing secured the perimeter of the premises to prevent children accessing the front of the premises when playing outdoors.

##### Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were accessible to children. Pedal bins were available in the preschool rooms and sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation as well as openable windows. The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows. The service was clean and well-maintained on the day of inspection.

##### Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was stored in the kitchen out of reach of children. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Staff were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child.

##### Fire Safety:

Fire exit signs were posted on doorways in the service. Fire exits in the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. A fire assembly point was located at the front of the building in the carpark.

**Outing:**

The registered provider advised that the children are taken on an annual outing at the end of the academic year. The service had the relevant outings policy and risk assessments in place to support outings. Written parental consent forms were included in the children’s enrolment forms for the service.

**Non-Compliance Information**

**General Safety:**

Two children were observed to have popcorn for their lunch presenting a potential choking hazard to a child.

**Infection Control:**

Children’s hands were not routinely washed. Children were not brought to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks. This presented an infection control risk.

**Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

**Corrective & Preventive Action**

**General Safety:**

The registered provider sent a text to all parents reminding them that popcorn is not allowed as a snack for preschool children. To prevent re-occurrence the service has put a note in the enrolment forms under the healthy eating policy.

**Infection Control:**

Staff completed a handwashing activity with the children to remind them of the correct hand washing procedure. More time will be allocated to handwashing in the daily routine, specifically before snack times. Hand washing monitoring has been allocated to staff members daily tasks.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

Text message dated 11 December, following the inspection sent to parents by the registered provider, has been viewed by the inspector. Healthy Eating Policy with update regarding popcorn, received.

**Infection Control:**

Photo of handwashing routine has been placed over the sink in the sanitary accommodation.  
Photo of staff member’s task list received.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been 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). The FAR qualified staff members were available on the premises during the operational hours of the service on 11 December 2025.

(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.

### 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.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment were serviced on 03 November 2025.

(4)

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

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The most recent fire drill was recorded as taking place on 07 October 2025. There was no fire drill conducted in the service for the month of November.

(b)

Fire detection equipment had not been maintained within the required timeframe. A record demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms was not available.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (a) A fire drill was carried out in the service immediately post inspection. The registered provider allocated fire drill monitoring to staff members monthly tasks.

(b) Maintenance of the smoke detection alarms was completed on 14 January 2026. The registered provider plans

to enter into an annual contract with the fire safety system company for annual checks. A staff member has been allocated the task of fire detection equipment monitoring.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

Photo of fire drill log received. Photo of staff member's task list received.

Copy of maintenance certificate of smoke alarms dated 14 January received.

**Summary Comment**

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 26 have been addressed.

**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 twenty-two children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.