

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LS049
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Portlaoise Nursery and Montessori School
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Stradbally Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
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<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 TK60
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Avril Byrne
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	24/02/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	46	PM	31
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35K1W4
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Flynn and A Spain
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors

### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.
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### Description of service

Portlaoise Nursery & Montessori School offers full day care, part time and sessional early learning and care to children aged between 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 08:00-18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service operates from an adapted two-storey premises in the town of Portlaoise, Co Laois. The service consists of two entrance lobbies, a toddler room, caterpillar room, butterfly room and a kitchen on the ground floor. The ladybird room and sleep room are located on the first floor. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs eleven adults in the service. There were ten staff present on the day of inspection and the registered provider. The registered provider works directly with the children. The person in charge facilitated the inspection on 24 February 2026.

### 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), (3), (4) – Management and recruitment,
- Regulation 11 (1)(2),(8)(a) – Staffing levels,

- Regulation 16 – Record in relation to preschool service,
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play,
- 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 measures,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed an additional risk was identified under,

- Regulation 21 – Equipment and Materials.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 service had a designated person in charge.

(b)

The registered provider and the person in charge were on the premises throughout the inspection.

- (2)  
Twelve staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted;
- (2) (a)  
Seventeen written validated references were available from a previous employer and
- (b)  
Six written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c)  
A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of eleven staff members and the registered provider. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)  
Police vetting was available for five staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.
- (4)  
The eleven staff members and registered provider working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

## Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a)  
There was no named person to deputise in the absence of the person in charge or the registered provider.
- (9)(2)(b)  
One written reference from a reputable source were not validated in respect of one staff member employed in the service.
- (3)  
The procedures specified in paragraph (2) had not been completed prior to one staff member being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with children.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(a)  
The deputy person in charge has been appointed in the event of absence of the owner or manager.

(2)(b)

Staff references have been validated. The registered provider or person in charge will make sure that all references are validated prior to staff commencing employment.

(3)

The service will adhere to their procedure as per the Staff Recruitment Policy that states 'All staff must have cleared written references (at least two) and have Garda Check completed'.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

(1) (a)

Copy of updated staff structure and roles received.

(2)(b)

Copy of validated reference received.

(3)

Staff recruitment policy received and viewed.

### **Summary Comment**

Following review by the inspector of the actions and evidence submitted, the non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

## **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)-*

*(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,*

### Compliance Information

(1)  
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. On arrival at the service, there were forty-six children being supervised directly by nine childcare staff.

(2)  
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection demonstrated by the following observation;

#### Morning

- There were three adults providing direct care to nineteen children aged between 4-6 years in the Butterfly room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 18 months and 3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 3-4 years in the Caterpillar room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to eight children aged between 3-5 years in the Ladybird room.

#### Afternoon

- There were two adults providing direct care to five preschool children aged between 4-6 years in the Butterfly room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to eight children aged between 18 months and 3 years in the Toddler room.
- There was one adult providing direct care to eight children aged between 3-4 years in the Caterpillar room.

(8)(a)  
There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for 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:*

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i)(j)(k).

### 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 children

Snacks and lunches are brought in from home. The main hot meal was provided by the service and prepared onsite. The hot meal on the day of inspection was mashed potato, mince with carrot. An alternate meal of pasta in tomato sauce was provided to any child who did not eat meat. Children from the Caterpillar, Butterfly and Ladybird rooms sat at low tables eating together, staff also sat with the children, engaging the children in conversation. Children in the Toddler room were supported to feed in highchairs or at low level tables. Individual drink bottles were freely available in the preschool rooms or provided by the service.

Children were observed to wash their hands after outdoor play and before mealtimes.

Sanitary accommodation was available to the children directly off the preschool rooms and children accessed the toilet independently during the inspection. Nappy changing facilities were available on the ground floor off the Caterpillar room. Nappy changing procedures were carried out on a routine basis and more frequently if required. Children in the Butterfly room were observed engaged in group activity of singing and demonstrating actions. Children in the Toddler room enjoyed dancing and signing to 'hop little bunnies' with the staff.

##### Supporting relationships around children

Staff working with the children were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Family walls were displayed in the Butterfly room, helping the children feel connected to home. My Learning journals were maintained by the service and provided to parents at the end of the year. Children in the Ladybird room were observed to celebrate a child's birthday. A child friendly daily routine was on display in the Ladybird room on the wall and offered the children predictability which was signalled in advance of changes to the routine. A staff member in the Ladybird room was observed supporting a child by providing encouragement and support enabling the child to participate in group activities.

Communication with parents regarding the children's day to day learning and activities were provided at drop off and collection times. Additional updates were provided via an online messaging application. The service held an

annual Christmas concert in the local parish centre and a graduation ceremony at the end of term for children leaving to progress to primary school.

### Physical and material environment

The preschool rooms were laid out to facilitate free movement with various interest areas throughout. A dress up rail, kitchen area with play equipment and toy medical kits provided opportunity for role play. A rest area was in each preschool room with child size vinyl couches for reading and resting throughout the session. Musical instruments, building blocks, jigsaws and toy vehicles were positioned on low accessible shelves. Children in the Butterfly room participated in flash card activity where the staff member displayed a card and the children guessed the item and described it.

Children were provided with outdoor play throughout the day. Colourful sketches covered the ground and climbing frame where children had participated in drawing shapes and pictures with chalk.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The door to the sanitary accommodation off the Ladybird room was left open, while two children were inside. The inspectors, staff and other children had full visibility of one child using the toilet. A second child was washing their hands, while standing beside the child who was using the toilet. The child's privacy and dignity were not respected while using the toilet.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

After inspection the staff were advised to ensure that only one child is attending to the toilet at one time. Supervision will be provided when children are using the sanitary accommodation attending the toilets.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

NA.

### Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the actions and evidence submitted, the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 has been adequately addressed.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

*(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*

*(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*

*(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

*(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-*

*(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The preschool rooms were spacious for the children to move about and play during their time spent in the service. Suitable play equipment was provided which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and sensory materials in each room.

(b)

The Butterfly, Toddler, Caterpillar and Ladybird rooms had reading corners with rugs, child size vinyl couches and cushions. Books were provided in the rest areas in the rooms for children to sit and take breaks from activities. A sleep room with eight cots was provided for the sleep needs of children who required a cot to sleep in. Low level beds were available for children over 18 months who required a sleep. Clean bed sheets were available and placed on the beds at nap time.

(3) (a)

The outdoor play area was fully enclosed with a high-level concrete wall and gates to the front of the premises. The outdoor area was divided into four fenced areas which provided separate play areas for children of different ages and stages of development. Equipment in the outdoor area included balls, basketball hoops, climbing frames with swings, balance bikes and toy cars. An impact absorbing surface covered the concrete ground underneath a climbing frame and swings in the play area for children from the Butterfly room.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

Five children in the Toddler room were observed sitting in highchairs with no foot holds. Children being fed were observed to have their legs dangling, making it more difficult and uncomfortable for them to sit during feeding.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Footrest for existing highchairs were ordered and fitted. Going forward, only highchairs with footrests will be purchased.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of highchairs with new footrests received.

#### Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the actions and evidence submitted, the non-compliance identified under Regulation 21 has been adequately addressed.

### 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 two entrance doors to the service were secure and managed by the staff within. This prevented children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and unauthorised access to the service. A doorbell alerted staff to any visitors.

Two handrails were provided on the wall of the staircase to the upstairs preschool room and sleep room. A low-level handrail was in place for smaller children to use when transitioning between their rooms and the sleep room. The door handle on the door leading to the stairs had a high up handle out of reach of the children.

The strip light fittings throughout the service were observed to be covered with shatterproof covers. Cordless window blinds were observed on the windows throughout the service.

The radiator covers throughout the service were observed to be safely secured to the wall.

Cleaning products were stored safely in the kitchen and on high shelves out of reach of children.

Completed risk assessments for the preschool rooms and the outdoor play area were also viewed on the day of inspection.

The kitchen was inaccessible to the children on the day of the inspection with a gate which was observed to be closed throughout the day.

The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured by a wooden fence, concrete wall and gate.

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.

### **Infection Control:**

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Electric wall mounted hand dryers were at child level, secured safely to the walls and 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. The preschool rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

### **Administration of Medication:**

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and was stored safely in the kitchen. No medication was administered on the day of inspection. Staff were familiar with the procedure of administration of medication if required by a child. Staff informed the inspectors that no child attending the service was on specific medication.

### **Safe Sleep:**

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. A video monitor system was in place for sleeping children. A large wall mounted screen in the Toddler room on the ground floor provided full visibility and sound of sleeping children in the sleep room upstairs. Sleeping children were physically monitored at 10-minute intervals by a staff member. A record of the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children was noted in sleep logs. The sleep room temperature was recorded at 20.6 ° Celsius. The children's sheets and cellular blankets were kept in a unit in the sleep room and were individual to each child.

### **Fire Safety:**

Fire exits in the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. An external fire exit door was provided from the sleep room located on the first floor. An external staircase led down to the garden from this room. The fire

evacuation procedure for the upstairs sleep room was updated and displayed in the sleep room. A fire assembly point was posted on the wall at the side of the premises and at the rear wall in the outdoor play area.

**Outing:**

A policy was in place to support outings conducted by the service. During discussion with staff, they advised that the children participate in an annual outing to a farm. A risk assessment, check list and parental consent forms were completed prior to outings. .

**Non-Compliance Information**

**General Safety:**

Full grapes were observed in the lunch provided by parents for one child in the Butterfly room. Staff did not take immediate action and were notified by the inspector to cut the grapes in half. Full grapes present a potential choking hazard.

**Infection Control:**

A child in the Toddler room was observed to eat a snack brought in from home off the table. Staff did not provide a plate for a child to eat their snack from.

**Action submitted by the Registered Provider**

**Corrective & Preventive Action**

**General Safety:**

Staff were informed about choking hazards and the importance of cutting grapes, and cherry tomatoes lengthways. An email was sent to all parents regarding food that present a potential choking hazard. The copy of that email was also sent to staff. If a child has whole grapes, olives etc in their lunch boxes staff will cut them before lunch is served. New staff will be advised about choking hazard

**Infection Control:**

The children’s snacks are served in bowls/plates. Staff will be instructed regarding the correct way food is served.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

Copy of email viewed.

**Infection Control:**

Photographs of plates and bowls for children received.

**Summary Comment**

Following review by the inspector of the actions 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).

(2)(a)

Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located in each preschool room throughout the service.

(b)

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

### Non-Compliance Information

(1)

A review of the staff roster indicated that a First Aid Response (FAR) qualified staff member was not present in the service between 4-6pm on Tuesday 24 February and Wednesday 25 February, and between 2 - 6pm on Friday 27 February. This posed a potential risk to children in the event of a medical emergency.

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

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The roster was adjusted to have minimum of one FAR qualified staff on the premises at all times.

An extra staff member is scheduled to attend FAR training on 23 March – 25 March.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Course confirmation letter for FAR training viewed.

### Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the actions and evidence submitted, the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed.

## 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 monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 18 February 2026.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment on the premises. The firefighting equipment were serviced on 20 May 2025. The smoke detection system was serviced on 02 December 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display in all preschool rooms in the service and the upstairs sleep room.

## 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 56 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School