

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH004
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Name of Service:	ABC Montessori
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Address of Service:	Ballymacad, Oldcastle, Oldcastle, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A82 XV38
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Name of Registered Provider:	Geraldine Gill
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	09/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Swords Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell
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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Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

ABC Montessori service operates from a converted single storey unit in Co. Meath. The service is registered to provide sessional care, with sessions operational from 9.00am to 12.30pm and 9.15am to 12.15pm. The 12.30 to 3.30pm registered session is not currently in operation. The service provides Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to children aged 2-6 years old. The children have access to three open plan rooms. There is a kitchen area and sanitary facilities available. There is access to an outdoor area at the front of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children on a daily basis. The registered provider employs seven staff members who work directly with the children.

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 an unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child, Regulation 21 Equipment and materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 24 Checking in and out and record of attendance, Regulation 25 First Aid and Regulation 28 Insurance.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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, 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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service, and there was a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, and review of the staff sign in it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(c) On discussion with staff members and the registered provider, there was a clearly defined person and deputy person in charge to ensure lines of accountability.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(2) On the day of inspection, the recruitment files of the registered provider and seven staff members were reviewed.

(a)(b) Two written reference available for the registered provider, and fourteen written and validated references were available for the seven staff members.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for all staff members and the registered provider. However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years following a review of staff members previous employment in the service. This is examined in Regulation 23.

(d) International police vetting required for one staff member was available alongside the certified translation. Following a review of documents the other staff members did not require police vetting.

(4) The registered provider and seven staff members employed to work directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the inspector's unannounced arrival, the adult child ratio was observed to be correct and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult-to-child ratios were observed:

- In Room 1 there were 3 staff members and 16 children
- In Room 2 there were 2 staff members and 9 children

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- In Room 3 there were 2 staff members and 8 children

All children attending the morning sessions were aged between 3 years 8 months old to 4 years 9 months old.

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,

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

Supporting relationships around children

The staff members were observed to interact kindly with the children within their care. Following the last inspection the preventive actions had been maintained, and it was evident that children's choice was facilitated. Staff language to the children was open and inclusive and supported children's imagination, for example a staff member said to a child '*you make something and I will guess at the end*'. In each room children had access to a range of toys and equipment throughout the session, which children could readily access and change from as they wished. For example, a child doing a jigsaw came to look at the art activity and the staff member asked if they wanted to paint, so the child went and got a chair to sit and do art. In each room art and sensory activities were readily available. This included art stations where children were observed deciding if they wanted to participate after staff members had shown children the activity. Staff members spoke of supports in place for some of the children who required additional support. Staff were aware of individual goals and strategies required for support and these were observed being implemented by staff members. This was supported by daily communication with parents at drop off and collection. The inclusion of the children's community was also observed with a display of children and their pets which had followed a discussion with children. The children were also making arts and crafts for the small parade they were doing for parents and visitors for St Patrick's Day.

Basic Needs

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Children were able to use the sanitary facilities on an independent basis and were reminded by staff to use the sanitary facilities throughout the session. Children sat with peers whilst they ate their lunch and were given the role of taking the lunches from the fridge to their peers. Children were also observed helping to wipe the tables after art activities and move chairs for different activities. Children were also facilitated with outdoor play on a regular basis and were observed enjoying the outdoor areas.

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.

Compliance Information

Children had access to a range of activities and materials in each room. There were art materials which were easily accessible including low level drying racks that children accessed independently. In each room there were children doing jigsaws or making puzzles with magnetic blocks in small groups or individually, playing in home corners which included a range of play and real-life materials or looking at books. Toys and games available were in low level containers on shelves that were accessible to the children.

In each room the children had sufficient space and furniture to play and eat at a table as observed by the inspector.

Following the last inspection the preventive actions had been maintained in the three outdoor areas, as a range of equipment was available which did not impede the children's play or movement. The play equipment included climbing equipment, seating areas and ride on toys. There was also a sensory tray which included sand in each outdoor area.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

General Safety:

- The service had a secure entrance to the service with a buzzer system in place to prevent the unauthorised access of visitors or unsupervised exit of children.
- Emergency exits, hallways and the entrance to the service were clear of obstructions.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary facilities had warm water, paper towels and soap available for effective hand washing.
- Children were observed to wash their hands before eating and after returning from outdoor play.
- Children used the sanitary facilities independently and were observed to wash their hands and staff remaindered children as required.
- The care rooms and the communal areas of the service were visually clean.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Following a review of staff members employment in the service one staff member required an updated vetting disclosure.

Infection Control:

2. A risk of cross contamination was present in relation to the outdoor sensory play materials. The sand trays used by the children did not have a cover put over them when they were not in use. A cover reduces the risk of unhygienic materials entering the sand.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The registered provider submitted the updated Garda Vetting disclosure. A checklist has been developed to go on the front of each staff members file to demonstrate that it contains everything it should.

Infection control

2. The sandboxes have been covered, and a check has been added to daily checklist.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Updated Garda Vetting disclosure

Checklists

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Photograph of sandbox covers

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan, has addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The attendance records for all three rooms were completed contemporaneously and previous records were complete.

(3) (b) The inspector was requested to sign into the service, and a record of visitors was maintained.

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) The registered provider ensured that a person trained in a First Aid Responder (FAR) course was available. There were four staff members with FAR certification.

(2)(a) (b) The first aid equipment was conspicuous and easily accessible to staff members. The first aid equipment available provided adequate resources in the event of a first aid emergency.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The policy showed that the service was adequately insured from 28 November 2025 to 27 November 2026.