

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH004
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	ABC Montessori
-------------------------	----------------

Address of Service:	Ballymacad, Oldcastle, Co. Meath.
----------------------------	-----------------------------------

Eircode:	A82 XV38
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Geraldine Gill
-------------------------------------	----------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date(s) of Inspection:	18/04/2023
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	No.
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Common's Road, Navan, Co Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	C Tunney and S Cully
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

ABC Montessori is a privately operated childcare service in operation since 2013. The service provides a sessional education and care service to pre-school children aged from 2 years to 6 years. The service operates from 09:00 hrs to 12.00pm hrs and 09.15hrs to 12.15 hrs. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) scheme. The service consists of three pre-school rooms. Additional facilities include sanitary accommodation, an office, and three outdoor play areas where two rooms open directly onto the outdoor area.

Staffing

Six adults are employed in the service including the registered provider. The registered provider is the person in charge and was present on the day of inspection.

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/ safety and safety. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 15 Records of pre-school Child, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 16 Record in relation to Pre-school Service, 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 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 27 Supervision.

The scope of the inspection included Pre-School Room, 1, 2 and 3.

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, 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, 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and a named person was appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(c) There was clear management structure in place and the management structure was displayed in the hallway.

Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the registered provider, two staff files were reviewed.

(2)(a) Three written and validated references were available and were from previous employers.

(b) One written and validated reference was from a source other than a previous employer.

- (c) Garda Vetting Disclosures were available for the two staff members.
- (d) International police vetting was not applicable as the two adults had not worked outside the state for more than 6 months.
- (4) The staff members held a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at level 5 and 6.

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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed:

- In **Pre-school Room 1** there were 19 pre-school children aged between 4 years to 6 years attending for a sessional service, being cared for by 3 adults.
- In **Pre-school Room 2** there were 10 pre-school children aged 3 years to 5 years attending for sessional service, being cared for by 1 adult.
- In **Pre-school Room 3** there were 9 pre-school children aged between 2 years 10 months to 4 years attending for a sessional service, being cared for by 2 adults.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Eleven registration forms were reviewed and found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.
- (3) (c) The records were open to inspection by an authorised person.

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.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the information as prescribed in Regulation 16 (a) to (k).

(3) The records were open to inspection by an authorised person.

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

(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.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic needs:

- The staff members were observed to be caring and attentive to the children and were responsive to the children's individual needs and preferences.
- The children brought their snacks from home and included sandwiches, crackers, cheese, yogurts, and a variety of fruit. The children were observed enjoying their snack in a relaxed manner. Children who were finished their snack went to the book area where they enjoyed looking at books, until their peers were finished eating, and the next activity commenced.
- Staff members were predictable and informed the children in advance of the next activity, which allowed the children time for transitions, behaviour problems were not noted on the day of inspection. In Room 1 and in Room 3 children were observed engaged in play, in resourced interest areas of their choice such as home corner areas, arts and crafts area and construction areas.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children on the day of the inspection and the children were dressed appropriately in their coats and hats before going outside.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members were observed to engage in respectful and supportive interactions with the children in their care. The staff members used warm tones of voice and addressed the children by their name. The children were observed to interact comfortably with the staff members present and sought out staff for assistance and support when necessary.

Planning and Assessment

- There was evidence that staff members engage in planning and assessment, the inspectors noted the theme for the week displayed on the window in Room 3 for parents' attention. The theme was "under the sea" and the children were engaged in activities relating to the sea. Additionally, each child had a learning journal with a chronicle of activities carried out throughout the year which will be provided to the parents on graduation day or at the end of term.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic care Needs

- In Room 2, the inspectors observed that play was mostly adult led rather than a balance between adult and child led play. The ten children in attendance were observed sitting around the table for most of the session with the staff member providing the material the children engaged in. The children did not have opportunities to engage in play of their choice or were not observed playing freely.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- An in-house training afternoon was facilitated on Monday, 19th June. This training covered the updated Curriculum Policy, and the focus was on facilitating child led play. Educators learned what child-led play is and the benefits of child-led play. Educators were informed of their role in child-led play and how best to implement child-led play. See training points and staff signatures in evidence document.
- The daily timetables in the care rooms have been reviewed and updated to include allocated time for "Free Play" each day. See daily timetable in evidence document.

Preventive Action

- The Curriculum Policy has been reviewed and updated to ensure there is an emphasis on child-led play in the service. See updated Curriculum Policy and evidence of distribution to staff and parents in evidence document.

- Arrangements have been made for Better Start to begin working with ABC Montessori from September 2023. See Better Start correspondence letter in evidence document.
- A training request for “Aistear and the Child Directed Curriculum” has been made and relevant staff will be booked a place on this webinar at the earliest convenience. See Aistear and the Child Directed Curriculum training request email in evidence document.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. The registered provider has reviewed the service curriculum with appropriate actions taken. The service has also engaged in practice development to support their work in promoting the health welfare and development of children attending the preschool. Regulation 19 has been addressed.

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

There was a sufficient amount of play equipment and material to support the children’s welfare, development and learning.

The pre-school rooms were comfortable, colourful and child friendly. The play materials were displayed at child level which facilitated child directed play. The resourced designated play areas included home corner areas with support kitchen material, construction areas with cars, trucks, tabletop activities, and arts and crafts areas with painting, colouring opportunities and areas for storytelling and quiet time.

The play materials and equipment were stored on low-level shelving to facilitate the children to select and replace items of interest independently. Play materials were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children in the individual care rooms.

The three outdoor areas supported a range of physically active play and a change in environment.

Non-Compliance Information

The three outdoor areas were not resourced adequately; examples of this include the sand table in each area which were empty and were used for storage of play material, the water tray facilitating Pre-school Room 3 was also empty, and the messy kitchen areas did not contain support equipment. The environment did not support sensory or imaginative play.

The lay out of the materials did not maximise opportunities for children to engage in meaningful outdoor play such as valuable space in the outdoor area facilitating Pre-school Room 2 was taken up by plastic table/chairs and two tents which restricted the children's free movement.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- Unnecessary toys have been removed from the sand and water trays. Storage arrangements have been put in place for these toys. See photos of outdoor area in evidence document.
- The sand and water trays have been refilled and appropriated resources added. See photos of sand and water trays in evidence document.
- Appropriate resources have been added to the messy kitchen area. See photos of outdoor area in evidence document.
- A memo has been distributed to staff reminding them that toys are not to be stored in the sand or water trays and must be sorted in their allocated areas. Staff have been requested to notify management if additional resources are required in the outdoor area. See staff memo in evidence document.
- The outdoor area has been rearranged to ensure children have sufficient clear ground space for play and free movement. See photos of outdoor area in evidence document.

Preventive Action

- A training request for "Aistear and Outdoor Play and Learning in Summer" has been made and relevant staff will be booked a place on this webinar at the earliest convince. See Aistear and Outdoor Play and Learning in Summer training request in evidence document.
- The Outdoor Policy has been reviewed and updated. See Outdoor Policy and evidence of distribution in evidence document.
- Management will be carrying out regular spot checks to ensure that the outdoor areas are being kept tidy and there is sufficient free space for children to move around

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Photographic evidence was submitted to demonstrate the positive changes made to the outdoor area. Regulation 21 has been 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

The registered provider ensured all reasonable measures were put in place to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending such as;

General Safety

- The premises were appropriately secured to prevent pre-school children from exiting unsupervised and restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school. A code lock was noted on entrance to the outdoor area and the entrance doors were locked on arrival.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- Children's attendance was recorded correctly, a staff roster was available and displayed outside each pre-school room, and staff recorded their attendance on a daily basis in a record book held in the lobby.

Infection Control:

- The premises, its play equipment and materials were maintained in a satisfactory state.
- Warm running water was available in the children's sanitary areas, along with a supply of liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated bins.
- Prior to the children's snack, tables were cleaned.
- Windows were opened to allow fresh air to flow through.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety

Whole grapes which were not sliced were noted in a child's snack box which presented as a choking hazard. While the healthy eating policy included that whole grapes are not permitted as part of the children's snack this was not adhered to on the day of inspection which presented as a safety risk.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

General Safety:

Corrective Action

- The Health Eating Policy has been reviewed and updated. This includes "Berries, grapes and tomatoes must be halved or quartered". See updated Healthy Eating Policy and evidence of distribution in evidence document.
- A memo has been distributed to staff reminding them that as part of the Healthy Eating Policy grapes must be halved or quartered as they pose a choking risk to children. In the instance where a child's grapes are not cut, staff have been requested to arrange for the grapes to be cut in service and notify management to issue a further reminder to the specific parent. See Staff Memo in evidence document.

Preventive Action

- A poster has been displayed on the notice board as a visual reminder to parents and staff that grapes and berries must be halved or quartered. See grapes visual aid in evidence document.
- Management and staff will be carrying out regular spot checks to ensure that children's lunches are meeting the criteria set out in the healthy eating policy.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Appropriate action has been taken to alert parents and staff to the risk associated with food that can cause a medical emergency. Regulation 23 has been addressed.

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-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

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

Compliance Information

(1) A record was kept of each child's time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

(3) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance, the inspectors were requested to record their attendance and departure time.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) There were records of monthly fire drills carried out in the service, the last recorded fire drill took place on 22nd March 2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced in November 2022 and 1st January 2023.
- (2) (c) The fire record was available and open to inspection by an authorised person.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

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

On the day of inspection, the pre-school children attending the pre-school were supervised at all times.