

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015MO036

Name of Service: Country Montessori Preschool Service

Address of Service: Collagh, Meelick, Swinford, Co. Mayo

Eircode: F12 VP40

Name of Registered Provider: Mary Sheedy

Service type: Sessional

Dates of Inspection: 16/04/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	8	PM	9

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell
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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Description of service

Country Montessori Preschool Service is privately owned and operated, providing sessional services from 8:30 hours to 11:30 hours in the morning and 12:30 hours to 15:30 hours in the afternoon. The service caters for children aged from 2-6 years of age and is in a dedicated section of the registered provider's home near Swinford in Co. Mayo. There is one playroom and sanitary facilities provided in the building. Enclosed outdoor play areas with play equipment are provided to the rear and side of the building.

Staffing

There were three staff members including the registered provider and relief staff employed in the service at the time of the inspection. A staff member was employed through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 10, 11, 16, 23, 27, 31 and 32. 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.

Additional information

The inspection was triggered by information received by the Tusla Inspectorate. The inspection process included a review of the regulations relevant to the information submitted.

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

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.

Compliance Information

(2)

The registered provider confirmed that there was one new staff member working in the service since the most recent inspection of 1 February 2024. The vetting documentation for the other two staff members had been previously reviewed. The following documents were available on file or not required for the staff member new to the service:

(a) Two written validated references from past employers, particularly the most recent employer.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was not required for the staff whose vetting documentation showed that they had not lived outside of the State for more than six months as an adult.

(4) All three staff in the service held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or equivalent award.

(7) It was confirmed by the registered provider and staff during discussion with the inspector that induction training including training on the service policies and procedures was provided for staff when they started working in the service. Induction training checklists were completed and signed by the staff and registered provider who provided the induction training. Copies of the induction checklist forms were kept on file in the service. Staff were provided with copies of the service policies and procedures with written records kept. The service had scheduled a staff training day for policy training and updates for later in the week of inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

Written copies of policies were in place in the service and made available by the registered provider for review by the inspector on request. The following policies were reviewed and found to contain the necessary information to meet the regulatory requirements:

- (b) Complaints policy.
- (j) Policy on accidents and incidents that included risk assessment should took place following accidents/incidents in the service to help prevent reoccurrence.
- (k) Policy on authorisation to collect children.
- (r) Risk management policy.
- (t) Staff training policy including information on staff induction to the service.

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 inspector's unannounced arrival to the service there were two staff members working directly with eight children. The two staff members directly cared for nine children present during the afternoon session on the day. A review of a sample of the children's attendance and staff working hours recorded in the attendance book showed that there was always an adequate number of adults working with the children in the service.

- (3) The minimum ratio of 1 adult to each 11 children for the age range of the children present attending sessional services was adhered to with two adults working with eight children in the morning and nine children in the afternoon session on the day.

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:

- (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;*
- (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)
- (g) The registered provider had copies of the required written policies, procedures and statements in place in the service.
 - (h) The children’s attendance was recorded daily in an attendance book with the details of the children present in both sessions on the day recorded accurately.
 - (i) Written details of the staff working hours were kept with times of starting and finishing work recorded and made available to the inspector for review.
 - (k) The registered provider kept written records of accidents, incidents or injuries to children in the service in an accident and incident record book that was made available for inspection.
- (3) The records were made available by the registered provider to the inspector in the service on request.

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:

When the inspector arrived unannounced at the service the main entrance door at the side of the building with a glass window was found to be secured. This door was secured at all times on the day when not in use to allow people to access or leave the building. The kitchenette area in the playroom and the door from the playroom to the registered provider's home were secured when children were present to prevent children from accessing these areas. Repairs had been carried out at fencing in the grass outdoor area following a recent storm that had caused damage. The outdoor areas were enclosed and secured to prevent children from leaving the areas unnoticed.

A risk assessment had been carried out by staff following a recent incident in the service in line with the service's risk management and accident/incident policies with actions taken in response to the risk identified. When children arrived for the afternoon session, the entrance door was unsecured by staff and opened allowing children to enter with two staff present to supervise their arrival. The door was immediately closed and secured following arrival of the children. The staff linked in with each other to confirm which staff member would supervise the children who wanted to play outdoors and who would supervise children playing indoors. The main entrance door was immediately secured by staff once a child who had arrived at the session late was admitted.

The staff ensured that cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children. Play equipment was suitable for the children using it on the day and in good condition.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exits and routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

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

The children were supervised in accordance with the required adult to child ratios of a minimum of 1 adult to each 11 children in line with the service's accident and incident policy. The staff were observed to supervise the

children mainly by sight. Children when using the toilet by themselves were within earshot of staff members if they needed assistance. During the transition from the service at collection time on the morning of the inspection, the children were supervised/assisted by staff when putting on hats and coats and lining up at the door. Once all children were ready and some parents/guardians were visible through the main entrance door window, the staff unsecured and opened the main entrance door. The staff handed over the children to the care of their parent/guardian one by one. When the children arrived for the afternoon session, the staff linked with each other to confirm which staff member would supervise the children who wanted to play outdoors and who would supervise children indoors. At mealtimes the staff were observed to sit with the children and chat with them whilst supervising them.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.

Compliance Information

(e) The registered provider submitted a notification in writing to the Early Years Inspectorate within the required timeframe in relation to a recent incident in the service.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The registered provider had a complaints policy in place in the service. This policy provided information on;

- (a) the procedures to be followed by a person who wanted to make a complaint about the service,
- (b) the processes for dealing with the complaint,
- (c) the way the person who makes a complaint will be kept informed of how their complaint is being dealt with.