

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2015MO036 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Country Montessori Preschool Service |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Collagh, Meelick, Swinford, Co. Mayo |
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|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| <b>Eircode:</b> | F12 VP40 |
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|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Mary Sheedy |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|

|                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Service type:</b> | Sessional |
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| <b>Dates of Inspection:</b> | 18/05/2026 |
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|                                   |    |   |    |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|---|----|---|
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | - | PM | 9 |
|-----------------------------------|----|---|----|---|

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|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Early Years Inspectorate,<br>TUSLA, Child and Family Agency,<br>2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ.,<br>Castlebar,<br>Co. Mayo |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>                | M Farrell                                                                                                            |
| <b>Title:</b>                                   | 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).

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### Description of service

Country Montessori Preschool Service is a privately operated sessional service. The service provides a morning session from 8:30 hours to 11:30 hours and an afternoon service from 12:30 hours to 15:30 hours. The service caters for children aged 2-6 years of age. The service 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 service. The children have access to well developed, enclosed outdoor play areas with play equipment located to the rear and side of the building.

### Staffing

There are three staff working in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children and a relief staff member.

### 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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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

*(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*

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*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

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the persons in charge it was determined that there was one new staff member in the service since the previous inspection.

The following information was available on file for inspection:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for the staff member.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three staff. 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 new staff member whose vetting documentation showed that they had not lived outside the state for longer than six consecutive months as an adult.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available for the new staff member who worked directly with the preschool children.

### 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 observed to work directly with the children in the service during the inspection. On the inspector's announced arrival to the service there were 2 adults working directly in the with 9 children. Review of a sample of attendance records found that adequate numbers of staff had been provided to work directly with the children.

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- (3) The minimum ratio for sessional services providing care to children over 2 ½ years of 1 adult to each 11 children was adhered to in the service. 2 adults worked directly with a maximum of 9 children during the afternoon session.

### 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)

The children spent a large amount of time playing outdoors during the inspection in the well-developed outdoor areas. Some children played together in groups at water tables while others chose to play with transport toys and toy dinosaurs in the sheltered area that had impact absorbent tile ground cover. The sheltered area also had a playhouse, dolls and recycled kitchen equipment that the children played with. Later children played on the range of ride on toys including tractors in the area with concrete ground cover. The large, enclosed grass area was not used during the inspection.

The service was taking part in a biodiversity programme involving the children in nature conservation. The service had a received a nature box (bosca dúlra) containing equipment to support nature trails, games and actions to promote biodiversity that were being used by the staff and children. The children showed the inspector flowers that had been sown in a rewilding area and spoke excitedly about nature including bees, butterflies and tadpoles. The staff took opportunities to use the discussions for learning for example learning about colours and numbers of leaves and they sang songs about nature with the children.

After lunch the children played indoors for a time selecting toys from the large range in the open low level storage systems that they would like to play with. One child chose a book from the extensive selection of age-appropriate books to be read to the children by the staff. Some children played in the home corner and others played with construction and transport toys. A group activity was enjoyed by the children colouring a picture of birds in a nest. This activity generated a large amount of discussion between children and staff about a robin's nest that had been recently discovered in the service.

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A rest area was provided near the book section if children wanted to relax during the session.

Individualised care plans had been developed by staff in consultation with parents and relevant health professionals for children where needed. The staff worked in partnership with parents and health professionals to meet children's individual needs in the service. Each child had an extensive learning journal that had been created by the staff including photographs, artwork and observations of their progress. Completed parent feedback templates were included in the sample of journals viewed by the inspector with positive comments from parents observed. Photographs were observed of the festivals that were celebrated in the service for example St Patrick's day and Easter.

The staff members used electronic applications to help communicate with parents including providing updates of the children's activities. The staff were observed to speak with parents/guardians when collecting children and tell them about the children's day in the service. Daily communication books were also used to help communicate with parents if needed.

The children ate their lunch from the plastic plates provided seated outside at low level tables in the sheltered area. The food had been provided from home and included sandwiches, chopped fruit yoghurt and cheese-based snacks. All the children had drink containers that they had access to if they needed a drink. The children used the toilet when they needed to with support provided by staff where needed. Children were encouraged and supported by staff to wash their hands after using the toilet.

The children's behaviour was managed positively with the staff encouraging children to take turns and share toys when a disagreement arose between children. Staff spoke to the children using warm voice tones and showed awareness of the children's interests and likes/dislikes.

Transitions between activities were supported by staff who let the children know when it was soon time to change from one activity to another. The service's daily schedule was displayed and followed on the day providing a sense of predictability for the children. An emphasis was placed by staff on the transition from the service to primary school. Teachers from local schools that the children planned to attend were invited to the service to visit, with photographs taken to help familiarise children with them. Photograph displays of the local school buildings and environments had also been created and were available at low levels for the children to look at.

### Part VI – Safety

#### Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

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*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 main entrance door to the service was appropriately secured during the session. The inspector was admitted by the registered provider following production of identification information. A visitor book was available and used to record visitor attendance in the service. The internal door between the service and the registered provider's home had a securing mechanism allowing staff to control access to the service. There was a half-door leading to the kitchenette that was secured by staff to prevent children from accessing the area. A securing mechanism was in place on the window at the front of the playroom. Cleaning products were stored in the registered provider's home and were inaccessible to the children. The toys and play equipment were well maintained, in good condition, and suitable for the ages and developmental stages of the children using them on the day. Soft padding was in place on the uprights of the shelter.

#### Infection Control:

The premises was observed to be clean with staff keeping records of cleaning processes undertaken in the service. The staff were observed to clean down surfaces after use such as the picnic tables outside before lunchtime and place wipeable tablecloth covers on them. A refrigerator was provided in the playroom and used to store children's lunches including perishable food items. The staff were observed to prompt and support children to wash their hands at key moments including before eating and after using the toilet. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash handbasin in the sanitary unit for handwashing. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for disposal of wastepaper after drying hands.

#### Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that none of the children attending the service at the time of inspection required medication to be administered to them. During discussion with the inspector, the staff showed awareness of procedures for the administration and storage of medication should it be required to be administered to a child in the service.

#### Fire Safety:

The emergency exits and escape routes were found to be free from obstruction.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

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*(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) Each child was checked in and out of the service by a staff member with up-to-date records kept by staff.

(3) (a) The staff approved the entry of the inspector to the service following review of identification documentation.

(b) Written details of the entry to the premises of the inspector were recorded in a visitor record book.