

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO106			
Name of Service:	Smarties Montessori School			
Address of Service:	The Old School House, Fahy, Westport, Co. Mayo			
Eircode:	F28 AX78			
Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Morahan			
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	25/02/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	12

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

Smarties Montessori School is a privately owned sessional and part time service located in a rural village in county Mayo. The service caters for children aged from two to six years of age between the hours of 09:00-14:00. A school aged service is also provided. The service is located in a premises previously used as a primary school and has a large playroom, office and sanitary facilities located in the main building. A second playroom is provided in a prefabricated building on the premises with sanitary facilities for children. A well-developed, enclosed outdoor area with play equipment is located to the rear and sides of the main building.

Staffing

There were seven staff in the service at the time of the inspection including the registered provider who worked directly with the children and a staff member employed to undertake administrative duties.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9 Management and Recruitment, 11 Staffing Levels, 15 Record of a Preschool Child, 19 Health, 23 Welfare and Development of Child Safeguarding

Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and 28 Insurance. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15: Record of a preschool child.

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

(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*

(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 in the service and a named person was available to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

The records of seven adults employed in the service were reviewed.

(a) Eleven written and verified past employer references were available for six adults employed in the service.

- (b) Three references from a reputable source in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of two adults employed in the service.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for seven adults working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

Six adults had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) International police vetting was not available for one of the adults that had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A copy of the international police vetting is now on file for the adult who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation submitted to the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider have adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection.

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) There were six adults working directly with children on the day of inspection.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
 - Green pod: Three adults cared for 19 children aged 3 -5 years of age.
 - Purple pod: Three adults cared for 20 children aged between 3 – 5 years of age.

In the afternoon the green pod was closed and the purple pod had 12 children between the ages of 3-5 years with 4 staff members caring for the children.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) to (i)

The inspector reviewed a random sample of ten children's records. The records contained the required details as laid out under the Regulation.

(3) (c) The required information was made readily available for inspection in the service by the registered provider on request.

(4) The registered provider confirmed that the records were retained for the required period of two years.

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

Basic Needs

- Drinking water was available to all children in individual beakers throughout the day.
- Children were observed eating their snack which consisted of fruit, yogurt, cheese and sandwiches in the outdoor sheltered area. Children were supported during mealtimes with opening food items when needed. Independence was encouraged with self-help skills. The service operated a rolling lunch system, where children have the option to eat at a time that is best suited to their individual needs.
- Children sat at tables and chairs which were appropriate for their height and/or stage of development.
- The staff were observed sitting at the child's level and chatted in a respectful manner.
- The privacy and dignity of each child was respected during toileting.
- Appropriate rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day.
- Children had easy access to the outside areas throughout the day and children moved freely between both indoors and outdoors.
- Appropriate outdoor clothes are provided by the service. The children spend much of their time outdoors in the several well-established outdoor areas.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions to sharing toys and equipment and turn taking.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.

Supporting relationships

- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. The inspector observed a child receiving comfort when they hurt their finger. The staff member offered reassurance and communicated using soft gentle tones.

- Staff supported children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- Emerging interests from the children guide the play and learning and the inspector observed imaginative and sensory play based around dinosaurs and slime.
- A group of children engaged in imaginative play, based on making potions with natural items found outdoors. The staff members engaged fully in this immersive play and helped to extend the play further.
- The service provided parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child, for example, verbal communication at drop off and collection times and through a bespoke childcare application.
- The service had a designated childcare application which supported interactive communication with parents and guardians. There was section with photographs and a description of the child engaged in activities.

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:

- An electronically operated system was in place at the entrance door to monitor the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within.
- Medication and cleaning agents were stored in a secured area out of reach of the children.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured to the windows throughout the service.
- Internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from accessing unsafe areas and the outdoor areas unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed washing their hands after messy play activities and before mealtimes.
- Warm water was available in all hand washing basins with temperatures ranging from 30.9°C to 35.9°C.
- Paper towel, liquid soap and lidded bins were available at the hand basins and sanitary areas in the service.
- The service was maintained in a clean condition.
- Perishable food items in the children's lunches were stored in the service fridge.

Administration of Medication:

- A plan was in place in relation to emergency medication that may be required to be administered in the service including medication administration recording documentation required to be signed by two adults. Safe storage was available for medication out of reach of the children in the playroom and the adults demonstrated awareness of the correct procedures in relation to the administration and storage of medication in conversation with the inspector.

Safe Sleep:

- Adequate numbers of stackable beds were available with individual bedding should children require a nap.

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 first aid is immediately available to the preschool children attending the service.

There were two adults employed in the service trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) with expiry dates of August 2025.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available and it was stored safely on a high shelf in the playroom.

The first aid box had adequate supplies for the number of children attending the service.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 27/03/2025, was for a part time service, for a maximum number of 44 children. The insurance covered the following,

public liability,

personal accident,

insurance against fire and theft,

buildings,

outings undertaken as part of the service provision.