

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015OY012

Name of Service: Sunflowers Montessori School

Address of Service: Birchgrove House, Cloonagh East, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Eircode: R35 NY33

Name of Registered Provider: Mireille Passchier

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 30/05/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co Offaly.

Inspection undertaken by: K. Murphy

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

The service is registered as a sessional service. The service is open Monday to Friday for 38 weeks between the hours of 09:30 and 12:30.

The Early Years' Service is located in the grounds of the home of the registered provider. One pre-school room is provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the front of the service. Onsite parking and set down facilities are provided. The service is in a rural setting in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Tullamore, County Offaly.

Staffing

There were four adults present on 30 May 2025 including the registered provider who works 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 unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

(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 and a named person to deputise were present and available as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present throughout the inspection.

Four files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from either a past employer or a source other than a previous employer in respect of the files reviewed. Two references were available for the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Police vetting was available and translated as required in respect of three staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff members working directly with children attending the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was exceeded during the inspection.

(3)

There were twelve children attending the service supervised directly by four adults.

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;

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development. Conversations and interactions between children and staff were observed during snack time. Children used the toilet independently and regular hand washing was observed.

The children were encouraged to be independent and their choices were supported. Staff were observed to offer support and praise to each child for their involvement in activities. The staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Staff members were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. Good teamwork between the staff members was observed during the inspection.

The service operated in partnership with parents and guardians. Daily and weekly updates are provided to parents and guardians in photographic and narrative form by means of an electronic application. Meetings and phone calls are arranged throughout the year to discuss any specific issues. A verbal handover on the child's day was given to the parents and guardians at collection time.

The pre-school room was laid out with areas of interest that incorporated real life play items and materials to stimulate each area of the child's development. Low level tables, chairs and low-level shelving with equipment

were available to all children. Play equipment and materials were accessible to children and individual preferences were accommodated as to what and how long children wish to engage with specific chosen activities. A range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, creative and enriching experiences were available for all children.

Materials included paint, play dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws and shape sorters. Children’s artwork was noted and paper, crayons, paint and a variety of open-ended art materials were in plentiful supply.

The outdoor area was equipped with a variety of slides, rockers, tables and benches, a water wall and a variety of bikes and trikes. A large grass surface area was also available to the children for organised games.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors.

(b)

Soft furnishings provided suitable and adequate rest facilities in the pre-school room.

(4)

An outdoor play area was situated in the garden area to the front of the service. The perimeter of the garden area was secured by a wire fence.

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:

The entrance door to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Paper hand towel and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and pre-school room for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exit routes were identifiable in the pre-school room and were unobstructed. A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the premises.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a nominated staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) has to be approved by a staff member.

(b)

A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service from the month of August to the month of June.

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)

One staff member was qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in an accessible and conspicuous location in the pre-school room.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to adults caring for children in the pre-school service.

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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 2 May 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced in August 2024. The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in May 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position 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

The children were observed to be supervised by the four staff members during the inspection. Children were accompanied by a staff member when using the toilet and handwashing was supervised. Staff supervised the children when playing in the outdoor play area. A staff member was observed to provide the handover of the care of each child to the parent or guardian at collection time.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 November 2025.