

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Tusla Identifier:	TU2015OY016
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Clara Montessori School
-------------------------	-------------------------

Address of Service:	c/o Scoil Bhride, Kilcoursey, Clara, Co. Offaly
----------------------------	---

Eircode:	R35 WP04
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Martina White
-------------------------------------	---------------

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

Date of Inspection:	27/01/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	15
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
---	---

Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan
----------------------------------	------------

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

Clara Montessori School is a sessional service operational since 1997. The service is registered to cater for preschool children in the age range, 2 years to 6 years. A sessional service operates from 9:00 am to 12:00 hours and from 12:00 to 15:00 hours, Monday to Friday throughout term time. Clara Montessori School is a privately owned service operating on the grounds of Scoil Bhride National School in the town of Clara, Co. Offaly. This early years' service operates from two prefabricated buildings located at the rear of the primary school. The children have access to a secure playground which is shared with the primary school pupils on a rostered basis. The preschool rooms are stand alone and are separate to the school and both have two toilets and wash hand basins, a cloakroom and storeroom. Car parking is available on the public car parking area outside the school grounds.

Staffing

The registered provider was present during the inspection but was not part of the staff compliment during the afternoon session. Eight adults including the registered provider are employed in the service. All staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under.

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

however, on inspection additional non-compliances were identified under:

- Regulation 29(d) – Premises.

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

1. A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child was issued to the registered provider by the Early Years Inspector on 27 January 2026.
2. The written response received by the Early Years Inspector on 28 January 2026 from the registered provider in relation to the immediate action notice was accepted.

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.

Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a)(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were available in respect of eight adults employed whose staff files were reviewed.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all 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.
- (d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months whose records were reviewed.

(4) Eight adults employed to work directly with children attending the service and held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher or a recognised equivalent qualification 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) There were thirty-nine children attending the service being supervised directly by seven adults.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

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 Prefabricated building where the Butterfly room was located was secured and managed by the staff 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 safe storage of cleaning agents.

The staff members were aware of the potential choking risks that grapes posed when asked by the inspector. They advised they were very observant of any food provided that had the potential risk of choking and immediately removed or cut the food into smaller pieces. They also advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if they observed that a child was wearing one.

There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed daily and reviewed by the registered provider to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. The staff were observed washing their hands also. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored. Detailed health care plans in place for children attending the service who had a health condition.

Safe Sleep:

There was a defined rest area in place in each care room

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out, and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. Fire assembly signage is in place in the outdoor area at the rear of the service.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that service does not conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The entrance to the prefabricated where the Caterpillar room was located, was not secured and the inspector walked into the care room.

A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child was issued to the registered provider by the Early Years Inspector on 27 January 2026.

2. Two tall units in the Caterpillar room with resources stored on them were not anchored to the floor or a wall. This posed a risk of injury to the preschool children if the units tipped over.

Infection Control:

3. Children’s lunches, some of which contained perishable items were not stored in fridge in either care room. It is acknowledged that there were fridges in both care rooms.

4. A nappy change mat was not stored in closed container in the sanitary area used by the Caterpillar room.

5. Paper towel rolls were not placed in dispensers for hygienic dispensing in the Caterpillar and Butterfly rooms.

Safe Sleep:

6. The rest area in Butterfly room requires to be developed to create a cosy and restful space for the children who wish to take a break from activities.

Fire Safety:

7. The fire evacuation routes in the care rooms were partially impeded by furniture and resources which could compromise the evacuation of the children and adults in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Clearly visible signs put in place on the external door stating door must be kept locked at all times. The internal care room door lock left in such a way that it locks automatically. Currently this door does not allow children to open it and gain unsupervised access to the lobby, but this added action will provide additional

security. If a staff member has reason to leave the building, she must request another staff member to lock the door when she leaves. All staff members have committed to observe and remind each other to keep the doors secured at all times.

2. All tall shelves have been secured to the walls.

Infection Control:

3. Lunch boxes are now checked by staff each morning and perishable items removed, placed in a bag and labelled with the child's name and placed in the fridge. If there are a number of perishable items in a lunchbox the lunchbox is placed in the fridge.

4. Changing mat is now stored in bag with a zip closure and a hook has been attached to the wall to store the mat when not in use.

5. Portable dispensers have been purchased for the blue paper rolls in each room.

Safe Sleep:

6. We have added back the soft couch to the rest area and added additional soft seating and a canopy to make the rest area more appealing and cosier.

Fire Safety:

7. The furniture and play areas in both rooms have been rearranged in such a way as to allow clear access to the fire exits for staff and children. All staff have been instructed that the fire exits must be kept clear and a clear route visible so as not to impede exit from the room in the event of an emergency.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographs points 1 and 2.

Infection Control:

Photographs points 3, 4 and 5.

Safe Sleep:

Photographs point 6.

Fire Safety:

Photographs point 7.

Summary Comment

The written response and photographic evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23.

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.
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.
- (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 registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a), (b) The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained. The inspector's visit to the service was documented in the visitor's book on arrival.
- (4) The registered provider confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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) Five staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the service.
 - (b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children in the two care rooms attending the 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 was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 8 December 2025.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on 4 December 2024, and the smoke alarm was serviced on 4 May 2025.
- (4) Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

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

Children were observed being supervised at all times throughout the inspection by the staff caring for them in their care rooms, in the sanitary areas and during the various transitions throughout the day.

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 was noted to be 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c) There was no mechanical ventilation installed in the enclosed sanitary area on the left-hand side in the Prefabricated building named as the Caterpillar room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) A mechanical ventilation fan has been installed in the toilet cubicle, and the ducting is to the outside. It is electrically operated. The extractor fan will remain in place and will be kept maintained in working order going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two photographs.

Summary Comment

The written response and photographic evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 29(c).