

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015OY031		
Name of Service:	The Cottage Montessori		
Address of Service:	Harbour Road, Banagher, Co. Offaly		
Eircode:	R42 D295		
Name of Registered Provider:	Marguerite White		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	16/09/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM N/A
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 catering for up to 22 children. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 09:00 and 12:00 on a Monday to Friday basis for 38 weeks. The service is operated by an independent provider.

The Early Years' Service is located in a single storey purpose-built premises located on the grounds of the home of the registered provider. One large pre-school room is provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. The service is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Banagher, County Offaly.

Staffing

The registered provider and one childcare practitioner work in the service and were present on the day of inspection.

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 deputy were available in the service.

(b)

The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection.

Two 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 for one staff from past employers. The required number of written references were available in respect of the registered provider from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the two files reviewed. In respect of one of the two files reviewed the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 to 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 ten children attending the service supervised directly by the staff member and the registered provider.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)

In a sample review of twelve child records for children enrolled to attend the service the details relating to

(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f) (g)(h) and (i) were in place.

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

The care practices and routines were child led with the staff following the individual verbal and non-verbal cues of the child. The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child, their personalities and their daily routines. Staff were observed to give comfort and reassurance to the children. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, toileting and mealtimes.

Seamless transitions were noted as the children were given a lead in time to change from one activity to another. Positive behaviour strategies were observed during the inspection. Staff used a calm approach using soft language tones, giving positive praise and encouragement to children. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

Children who went to the toilet independently were supervised by a staff member. The personal hygiene of the children was maintained with children's noses kept clean and regular handwashing taking place during the morning.

Children were observed to move between the various environments and play activities enjoying physical play and gross motor activities as well as imaginative and sensory play.

Individual learning journals and photograph books are used to record photographs and narratives relating to the children's activities and daily life in the service and to provide a permanent record for each individual child.

At collection time parents were provided with a verbal handover on the activities and progress of each child throughout the morning.

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 which included toys and equipment for construction, sensory, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, home corners and physical play.

(b)

Child sized vinyl sofas provided appropriate rest facilities in the pre-school room for any child who wished to avail of rest and relaxation.

(4)

A designated garden area with natural grass, stone and paving surface areas were available. The perimeter was secured by a high-level concrete wall. The outdoor play area was equipped with a painting station, art easel, sensory trays, a variety of bikes and trikes, a crawl tunnel and planting areas.

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 to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. Visitor access was controlled. The inspector signed the visitor book on arrival. 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. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. The pre-school room and the sanitary accommodation were ventilated by natural ventilation with windows open.

Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. The temperature of the water recorded at the wash hand basins was approximately 30 degrees Celsius.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet under the supervision of staff.

A refrigerator was available for the storage of beverages and perishable foods in the pre-school room.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school rooms and in the associated sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

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

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed and a fire assembly point was located to the rear of the premises.

Outing:

The registered provider stated that outings were not carried out from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The most recent Garda vetting disclosure presented in respect of one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider stated in the response that the Garda vetting disclosure has been received by the service and submitted to Tusla.

In the future the service will monitor the expiry dates and adequate time will be provided for the application and renewal process. (Garda vetting disclosure submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective action taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

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

(2)(a)
A fully equipped first aid box was readily available in the service.

(b)
A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the 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 8 September 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 and the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in January 2025.

(4)

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

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 March 2026.