

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015OY063		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Muddy Puddles Montessori		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Gracefield, Portarlinton, Co. Offaly		
<b>Eircode:</b>	R32 PK33		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Bernadette Mitchell		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	30/01/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	11	PM NA
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	C. O' Connor Hughes		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.		

### Description of service

The service is registered as a sessional service to accommodate eleven children. An Early Education and Care programme is provided to children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service is operated by an independent provider. The Early Years' Service is located in a single room in the registered provider's home. An outdoor play area is attached to the side of the premises. The service is located in Portarlington, Co. Offaly.

### Staffing

The registered provider and a staff member were working directly with the children on the 30 January 2025.

### 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 member 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 is the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise in the service.

(b)

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

The files of the registered provider and a staff member were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

Two written validated references were available in respect of the staff member from previous employers.

(c)

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

(d)

Police vetting was not required as the registered provider or staff member had not lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

The registered provider and staff member working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and Level 6 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 ratio of adults to children was adequate during the inspection.

(3)

There were eleven children attending the service supervised directly by the registered provider and staff member.

### 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 eleven child enrolment records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of children attending the service.

## 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;
- (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)(k).

## Part IV – Information and Records

### Regulation 17 – Information for parents

*A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).*

#### Compliance Information

Parental information was available in the form of “our family guide 2024 to 2025” in respect of Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g).

## Part IV – Information and Records

### Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

*A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations was available and open to inspection by (a) (b) and (c).

### 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)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service. Children enjoyed extended outdoor play in the various play experiences in the outdoor play area. Children were encouraged to choose the activity they wished to participate in. Children enjoyed sensory play at the sand table in a small group while remaining children enjoyed the other play experiences in pairs or individually. Children were observed to be independent when removing their outdoor suits and wellington boots when moving from the outdoor to the indoor environment supported by the adults. Transitions were seamless as a clock was used to give children notice of change from one activity to another. The children decided when they wanted to have their snack and moved into the playroom in their own time.

Children enjoyed a healthy snack provided by their parents which consisted of sandwiches, fruit, yogurts, crackers with water to drink. Conversations and interactions were observed amongst the children during snack time.

Adults worked well together during the morning session. Adults were positive towards children using soft language tones, eye contact and individual names when speaking to the children. Positive praise was given to children on completion of activities. Adults were familiar with each child and their personality. Children were reassured when upset in a positive caring manner supported by the adults.

The indoor environment offered Montessori materials that included practical, communicating, life, and culture elements of the Montessori method. Other play materials were accessible to children on low level shelving and included paint, books, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals, construction toys, cars and fine motor skill toys. A reading area, a shop, a home area and a nature table were noted in the playroom. Children were happily engaged in free play after their snack supported by the adults.

The service works in partnership with parents by communicating regularly via a short messaging system (SMS) with information and updates. The child's learning folder was available for each child depicting their work and play activities which is shared with parents biannually. The parents are afforded the opportunity to share feedback and play activities that occur at home in the journal.

The registered provider stated a mo scéal story is provided for parents to share with their child's local national school is they wish to do. A visual poster of the town's local amenities and the children's family homes were displayed in the hallway of the service.

### 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)

Adequate and suitable play equipment and materials were provided in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

(b)

A rest area was provided in the playroom for children to rest and relax.

(4)

The outdoor play was safe and secure surrounded by fencing and a gate. Toys and equipment included a wooden wigwam, sand play, a playhouse, a climbing frame, a bird table, tyres, a mud kitchen and a balancing beam.

## 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 safe and secure. Access to the service is by means of a secured gate into the outdoor play area that leads into the pre-school entrance.

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 was visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Warm water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the service.

##### Administration of Medication:

No medication was administered in the service. A temperature reducing medication is available if a child presented with a high temperature.

##### Fire Safety:

The fire emergency exits were free from obstruction in 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.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was located in the pre-school room.

(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 fire fighting 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)(b)

The firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced in August 2024.

(4)

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

## Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There was no documentation to indicate monthly fire drills were carried out in the service.

(1)(b)

There was no maintenance record to indicate that the smoke alarms were operational and maintained in the service.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a)

A fire drill record book was purchased and a fire drill was carried out on the 11/02/2025.

Management have purchased the fire drill record book and are committed to completing a monthly drill with the children.

(1)(b)

Management have employed the services of a fire service company, to carry out the testing of the smoke alarms.

The smoke alarms were tested on 25/02/25 and proven to be in sufficient working order.

The fire service company will carry out regular checks in future. Next one is scheduled for 6 months' time.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of fire drill record book and of fire drill record.

Service record for smoke alarm.

## Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

## 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 supervised in the indoor and outdoor environments by the registered provider and staff member during the inspection.

## 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 2025.