

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015RN016
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Elphin Montessori Preschool
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Abbeycarton National School, Abbeycarton, Elphin, Co. Roscommon
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F45 V302
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Catriona Beirne
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	15/03/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	18	PM	n/a
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Year's Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	A. Kennedy
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

This sessional service is located within a classroom on the grounds of the local national school within a short distance of the town of Elphin, Co. Roscommon. It caters for children from 2 to 6 years of age. This pre-school service is registered to operate a sessional service from 09:15 to 12:15hrs Monday to Friday. The service provides an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. It is separate from the main building and has its own entrance. There is a secure outdoor play area to the rear of the premises for children's play and exploration.

### Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service and has employed a person in charge to operate the service. There are three adults working in the premise-the person in charge and an additional adult. A third adult is employed to support a child on AIM support. Each of the adults hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 or over in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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.

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 person in charge, 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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises at all times when the pre-school children were present.

Files for the three staff were reviewed.

(2)(a) & (b) Six of the six written validated references, on file for the three staff were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the three staff. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service did adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Two of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age and had the required police vetting.

(4) The three staff who were working directly with children, held a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. Copies of qualifications were on file for the three staff.

### 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.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency*

#### Compliance Information

(1) At all times during the period of the inspection, the person in charge ensured that the adult child

ratios were adhered to.

(2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records indicated that the adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 18 pre-school children aged between 3 to 5 years. There were three adults directly caring for these children. The person in charge also assisted in the administration part of the inspection.

(8)(c) The person in charge ensured that there were two staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

### 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

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks without being rushed. The atmosphere during snack time was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to toileting. The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices. It was advised on inspection that all children are toilet trained.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence, and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.

For example, by:

- assigning a key person to each child;
- showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust;

- being actively involved in children’s play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining in when invited to by children);
- behaving in a way that creates a positive atmosphere (having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection);
- listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures and body language;
- encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking; nurturing and comforting children;
- using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- Visual aids (picture and word reminders) and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- The outdoor environment provided children with activities and opportunities for fresh air, and releasing energy (e.g., playing chase, hopscotch and snakes and ladders physical exercise and play (e.g., jumping, running),
- The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging each day while in the service.
- Children engaged in playing house / shop, matching cards, connecting, at construction, stacking, building, puzzle making, peg play, at dress up and role play, at imaginative play. There was also circle and story time and show and tell.
- In the outdoor area the children were observed running, chasing, and playing hopscotch.
- On speaking with staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents and guardians with daily information on their child’s experiences in the pre-school including the child’s likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times by text messages, by phone calls, and by email.
- Staff adjusted the level of support provided to children depending on the child’s abilities, allowing for children’s partial participation and participation with support.
- The staff listened to children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times. The staff acknowledged and accepted children’s feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children’s actions and other’s responses.

- The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. The staff encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. The children were given choice on what to do next.
- The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children’s choices. Children were supported by the staff during periods of individual and group-based activities, the staff sensitively supervised and intervened when necessary.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child’s activities and initiating games and activities.
- The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children’s inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child’s engagement in an activity ‘that is great’ ‘well done’ and used open ended questions such as ‘what should we do next?’, ‘is there any other way to do this?’, to allow children to critically think and explore.
- The children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told ‘no’. The children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

- The service had a healthy eating policy.
- At 11.15hrs, the children had their snack of sandwiches, wraps, homemade brown bread, crackers, carrot sticks and fruit pieces to include strawberries, raspberries, bananas apples, yogurt, provided by parents and guardians.
- Children’s drinks were available to allow the children the opportunity to ‘self-serve’.

### 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 preschool and the external outdoor play area were secured so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were secured and or inaccessible to prevent any trips or strangulation hazard.
- The playroom temperatures were thermostatically controlled, and maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water not exceeding 43°C to facilitate hand washing was available to facilitate hygienic hand washing.
- Heavy equipment and furnishings were anchored appropriately.
- Playroom windows were high and thereby inaccessible to the children.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- There were no pits or ponds in the designated outdoor area to cause any risk of injury to the pre-school child.
- The staff clearly identified to the early year's inspector, the drop off and collection procedures for children.
- A system was in place to ensure that daily records of attendance were kept for all the children, attending the pre-school.

##### Infection Control

- The inspector observed that the children washed their hands regularly throughout the inspection to include, prior to consuming snack, after outdoor play and after toileting.
- Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- The playroom and sanitary accommodations had foot operated lidded bins.
- The pre-school room and sanitary areas were well ventilated with the windows open throughout the inspection.
- . Tabletops were cleaned immediately prior to children's snack break.

### Administration of Medication:

- There were no medications administered to the children on the day of the inspection.
- The staff demonstrated knowledge of safe practices with regards to the safe storage and administration of medication should it be required.

### Fire Safety:

- Monthly fire drills were carried out on the premises to ensure the children were familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency.
- All exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the inspection

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. The stairgate was not adequately and securely fitted at the stairs and could be a pose risk of injury to a preschool child.

#### Infection Control

2. The children's lunches containing perishable foods were stored in their bags in the entrance hall. The room temperature taken on the day was 14°C therefore, the food was not kept below 5°C as recommended by the Department of Health and Children's *Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-School Service* (2013) potentially increasing the risk of gastrointestinal infections.
3. A section of the plaster work surrounding the main entrance door of the premises was cracked and uneven and could prove difficult to effectively clean.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

The person in charge advised on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April

#### General Safety:

1. The stairgate has been fixed by our carpenter.

#### Infection control

2. Perishable foods are stored in the refrigerator.
3. The plastering surrounding the main entrance door has been replastered and repainted.

#### Preventive action

1. Regular risk assessments will be completed to ensure the gate is secured at all times.
2. The staff will ensure that all perishable foods are appropriately stored in the refrigerator.
3. Regular risk assessments will be carried out to ensure all areas are maintained in good condition.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Photographic evidence was submitted by the person in charge to advise of

1. The repaired and secured stairgate.

#### Infection Control:

2. The children's lunches stored in the service refrigerator.
3. The repaired and repainted plasterwork surrounding the main entrance door.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed. These will be reviewed on next inspection.

### 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) Three staff working in the pre-school service had first aid training for children and were immediately available to the children.

(2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box were available and in an easily accessible conspicuous position.

(b) The first aid box was readily available, with content items within date.

### 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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
  - (b) an employee, and*
  - (c) an authorised person.*
- (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) Arrangements were in place to record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated 23<sup>th</sup> of February 2024.
- (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file, last annual maintenance dated 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2023.
- Records indicated that the last maintenance for the fire and smoke detection system was dated 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the playroom.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

### Compliance Information

The service had insurance with an expiry date 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, which was for a sessional service for 22 children which included the following: -public liability insurance, insurance against fire and theft, buildings insurance, and insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision.