

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN016
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Name of Service:	Elphin Montessori Preschool
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Address of Service:	Abbeycarton National School, Abbeycarton, Elphin, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	F45 V302
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Name of Registered Provider:	Catriona Beirne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	02/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Kennedy
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
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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/ 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 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, the relief staff and the registered provider were reviewed.

(2)(a) & (b) ten of the ten written validated references, on file for the five adults were from a past employer or from a source other than the past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the five adults 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 four 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 four 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.

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.

(3) Documentary evidence in the form of staff rosters indicated that the adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 19 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.

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

- The children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging. The children had opportunities to move about freely and explore their environment.
- The children were observed at free play, making puzzles, drawing, playing house / kitchen, using transport vehicles, and at dress up / pretend play. The children were observed stacking, constructing, shape sorting, connecting, and playing with animals and figurines.
- In the outdoor area the children were observed playing snakes and ladders, hopscotch, doing action songs with the adults and playing in the sand area.
- The staff acknowledged a child's achievements, 'well done', 'that's great' and the children were observed chatting, laughing and having fun.
- The staff supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships by having a key person system for each child, showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust,
- Listening to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures, and body language,
- The staff used soft tones of voice, used the child's individual name, and got down to their level and made eye contact.
- providing opportunities for individual and small group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging,
- It was advised by the person in charge that they work with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to

learning, changes in their life, and any other concerns. The inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents 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 and via text messages and by phone calls.

- 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. The inspector noted the staff acknowledged a child's achievements 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.
- On the day of the inspection the staff showed kindness. They were thoughtful, supportive, and reassuring whilst caring for the children. They cared for children by being supportive while the children engaged in free play, role play, and creative play. A climate was fostered where the children knew their boundaries.
- The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told 'no'. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. The 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

- There was a healthy eating policy. The person in charge advised that healthy eating was promoted within the service by visual aids, and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- At 11:10hrs, the children had their morning snack which consisted of sandwiches with various fillings, wraps, rice cakes, crackers, a selection of fruits and vegetables to include peppers, strawberries, raspberries, grapes, blueberries, bananas, raisins. apples and yoghurts. and water or juice to drink.
- Clean and safe drinking water was at a low-level and accessible to children in the playroom.

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 gate to 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.
- The 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.
- The stairgate was adequately and securely fitted at the stairs to prevent children accessing the stairs.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed washing their hands after toileting, outdoor play, messy play and after blowing their noses. The children washed their hands under supervision prior to consuming their snacks. The adults were observed regularly washing their hands including after disposing of tissues into bins.
- 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.
- Mouthed toys were removed after use and sterilised appropriately.
- Fixtures, fittings and play resources were observed to be in a hygienic condition.
- The adults showed awareness of the services procedures including the management of suspected infection when questioned.
- A refrigerator was provided for the storage of perishable foods.

Administration of Medication:

- 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
- The exit routes from the service were free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On the day of inspection, a temperature of 56.6°C taken at 12.14hrs and 57.2°C from the surface of the electric storage heater. These surface temperatures were above the recommended 50°C upper safety limit to prevent potential risk of injury to a child.
It is acknowledged that the person in charge acted immediately and switched the storage heater off when alerted by the early year's inspector.
2. There were no visibility stickers or posters on the low-level glass doors in the preschool room and leading to the outdoor area which could pose a potential risk of injury to a child.
It is acknowledged that the person in charge put posters on the low-level glass doors when alerted by the early year's inspector.
3. A section of the carpet in the preschool room was torn and could pose a tripping hazard.

Infection Control:

4. The child sized couch in the preschool room was ripped, frayed and worn and a section of the tape securing the linoleum in the children's sanitary accommodation was worn and uneven and could prove difficult to effectively clean

Administration of Medication:

- It was advised by the person in charge that one child has an allergy. There was no care plan in place for this child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

On the 19th May 2025 the manager submitted a written response to state:

- This heater was turned off immediately and the surface temperature of the storage heater will be set not to exceed 50 degrees.
- The posters on this door had been taken down because of recent window cleaning. They were put on immediately. We will endeavour to put the posters back up immediately after cleaning.
- The carpet has been repaired to ensure it is not a tripping hazard. We will risk assess the carpet continually for any trip hazards.

Infection Control

- A cover is presently being made for the couch by a local seamstress. The couch cover will be removable, durable and washable. The sanitary area will be risk assessed for worn tape.

Administration of Medication:

- This child's parent has signed a care plan, and we will have a written care plan in place for any child presenting with a medical condition.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

The manager of the service submitted photographic evidence of

- The posters on the low-level glass doors in the preschool room and the door leading to the outdoor area.
- The repaired carpet

Infection Control:

- Evidence to the couch sent for recovering

Administration of Medication:

- Evidence of the care plan devised for the child with allergies

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed and 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 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) Arrangements were in place to record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated 5th of March 2025.
- (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file with the last annual maintenance dated 10th of September 2024
- Records indicated that the last maintenance for the fire and smoke detection system was dated 29th of October 2024.
- (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 27th of March 2026, 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.