

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN017
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Name of Service:	First Steps Montessori
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Address of Service:	The Glebe, Athleague, Co Roscommon
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Eircode:	F42 AV63
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Name of Registered Provider:	Dervela Connaughton
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	20 October 2022
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	6
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, 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 service has been in operation as an early year's service since 2007. It is privately owned and operated. The premises is located in a rural area within close proximity of the village of Athleague in Co. Roscommon. It operates from a large L shaped room to the rear of the registered provider's domestic dwelling with a separate entrance. The sanitary accommodation is within close proximity of the preschool room and the service has an outdoor play area located at the side of the premises with direct access from the preschool room.

It provides a morning session from 09:00hrs-12:00hrs and an optional service is also provided as part-time day care should a parent wish to avail of it until 14:00hrs daily. The service is provided five days per week for children aged from two to six years of age. The pedagogy of the service is based on a play based and Montessori curriculum.

Staffing

The registered provider is the named adult in charge of operating the service together with an additional adult to act as deputy if required. The service employs two adults to work with the registered provider on a daily basis. The three adults hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. A relief person is also available to act in event of staff absence.

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 and safety.

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

The registered provider advised during the inspection that a school aged service is also provided daily catering for up to four school aged children from 2pm to 5pm daily. From assessment of the school aged register this service has not registered. The early years inspector has advised sac registration that this service is operating outside of registration.

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, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 was the designated person in charge on the day of the inspection. It was advised by the registered provider that in her absence, the deputy person in charge is the designated person.

(b) The registered provider was on the premises throughout the period of the inspection.

A sample of the records showed that the registered provider/deputy person in charge were present at all times when the service was in operation.

Since the last inspection on 19/09/2019, one new staff member had commenced in the service. This staff members file was reviewed.

(2)(a) &(b) Two references were on file in respect of the new staff member and were from a past employer.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available in respect of the new staff member.

(d) Police vetting was not required for the adult as they had not resided outside the jurisdiction for a period in excess of 6 months.

(4) The three staff members working in the service had evidence of a childcare qualification to 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) One reference on file from a past employer had no evidence of validation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

The registered provider submitted a written response to state the reference has been validated and is filed and available for inspection.

Preventive Action

The registered provider advised that she will ensure all staff files are checked to ensure all relevant information is available.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the validation of the reference.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive action submitted by the registered provider has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate and is deemed to address the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of the inspection, there were three adults working directly with seventeen children in the morning session and two adults working directly with six children in the afternoon session.
The children were aged between two years eleven months to four years nine months.
- (2) There were three adults working directly with seventeen children in the morning session and two adults worked with six children in the part-time service in the afternoon.
- (3) The appropriate adult/child ratios were maintained throughout the inspection and from inspecting the records adequate supervision is provided at all times with three adults in attendance on a daily basis in the morning session and one adult employed for the afternoon session with a second adult present if required.
- (8)(a) Documentary evidence indicated that at least two adults were on the premises at all times when the session was in operation.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (h) From reviewing the records of attendance, the time of arrival and departure was recorded daily for each child.
- (i) From reviewing the record of attendance of the adults, the time of entry and departure is recorded daily.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall ensure in providing a preschool service ensure that

(a) each child's learning, development and wellbeing is facilitated in the daily life of the preschool service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child.

Compliance Information

- Hand washing was carried out regularly in the setting independently by the children with gentle reminders from the adults after toileting, messy play activities and prior to consuming snack.
- Adequate tables and chairs were provided for the children and they were encouraged to self-feed and assisted by the staff if necessary.
- A healthy eating policy was in place within the service. There was evidence of healthy eating with the children consuming a morning snack of sandwiches, crackers, brown bread, rice cakes, a selection of fruits to include grapes, strawberries, pear, oranges, apples and yoghurts, a drink of water/juice.
- The snack time was unhurried and the children were encouraged to be independent. Much conversation was noted between the adults and the children during these periods.
- There was a cosy area within the preschool room with child sized couches provided which could be adapted as a rest area for the children to rest or opt out of activities if they so wished.
- Children were encouraged by the adults to do things for themselves and be self-caring around their toileting needs and the staff were available if required.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the playroom on the day of the inspection.
- Aprons were provided for messy play activities.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

- The indoor environment was comfortable, pleasant and well laid out to meet the needs of the children attending the service. There was a wide variety of play equipment and materials to stimulate each area of a child's development.
- An extensive selection of equipment was available within the preschool room for children's use to include an arts and craft area with a selection of materials to include paper, glitter, markers, chalk, paint and gluing materials, a table top area with a large selection of jigsaws, a kitchen/home area with child-

sized furniture with dolls and accessories, food items and food accessories, a play shop with food items and cash registers, a selection of dress up items and a vanity unit, a music area, a construction area with a selection of wooden and plastic blocks, tools and helmets, a reading/rest area with a large selection of books, fine motor activities to include threading exercises, pegging and sorting exercises, miniature animals and cars/trucks, a dolls house with accessories and a wooden farm set with a selection farm accessories.

- A selection of Montessori equipment was also available to include practical life exercises, sensorial and early language and maths materials.
- Messy play opportunities were provided with the provision of sand, water, play dough and paint.
- The materials were appropriate, diverse and challenging and supported all areas of development.
- The furniture provided in the service was low level and appropriate for the children attending.
- The outdoor play area is located to the side of the pre-school with direct access from the preschool room. The play area was well equipped to include an artificial grassed area with a large wooden climbing frame with a playhouse and swing set, balancing beams, a basketball hoop, a wooden climbing frame and playhouse and a selection of slides. A mud play kitchen with kitchen accessories, a covered sand area with digging accessories and a selection of bikes/trikes and scooters were provided in the sheltered play area.
- A large newly constructed sheltered outdoor area has been erected since the previous inspection of the service and this was equipped with storage hooks for the children's outdoor clothing and wellie boots, cubby holes for extraneous equipment, a play kitchen with accessories, a picnic bench, art easels, chalk play and outdoor play equipment to include bikes, trikes and scooters.

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

The following measures were in place in the service to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending:

General Safety:

The children were actively supervised at all times whilst playing within the preschool room during the inspection. Toys and play equipment were non-toxic and in good condition. The door to the premises was locked on arrival and the keys were out of child reach. All cleaning products were stored on high shelves and within a locked storage room which was inaccessible to the preschool children. Electric cables were secured and out of child reach. Tabletops were wiped clean before and after snack breaks. The toys and play equipment were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Infection Control

Regular hand washing by the adults and children was observed. Cleaning schedules were maintained for each area and recorded daily.

Adults prompted the children to wash their hands before eating, following toileting and after messy play activities. Adequate liquid soap and paper towels were available in the sanitary units. There were suitable cleaning products available in the service. Hand sanitizer was provided at the entrance area and in the outdoor area. The children were reminded throughout the session on nasal etiquette and the importance of washing their hands afterwards.

Administration of medication

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

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A kettle was stored on the countertop within child reach within the kitchenette space which could pose risk of injury to a preschool child.
2. A seesaw in the outdoor area had evidence of chipped paint and rust which could pose a potential safety concern.
3. Three bikes/ tricycles in the outdoor area were in poor condition with the seat cracked on one of them, paint was chipped and rust on the second bike and the basket broken on the third tricycle which could pose a safety concern.
4. There were two wooden side panels on a climbing frame in the outdoor area which were worn and posed a risk of splintering.
5. A lath of wood on the roof of the wooden playhouse in the outdoor area was worn and could pose risk of splintering.

Infection control:

6. Perishable foods were stored in the children's lunch boxes within the preschool room with the temperature recorded at 21.4°C. Perishable foods must be stored at a temperature below 5°C.
7. The water temperature of the hot water was only 13.3°C which was too low to enable effective handwashing. The recommended maximum temperature for effective hand washing is maximum 43°C.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective action

The registered provider submitted a written response to state;

1. The kettle has been removed from the area.
2. The seesaw has been removed from the outdoor area.
3. The three bikes have been removed from the school garden.
4. The side panels on climbing frame will be sanded down and repaired over the Christmas holidays.
5. The wooden house has been removed from garden.
6. All perishable foods are now stored in school fridge.
7. The water timer was faulty that day this issue has been fixed straight away

Preventive action

The registered provider submitted a written response to state;

All garden toys will be checked to ensure there is no evidence of rust or wear and tear and they will be stored in the shed.

The wooden equipment will be checked to ensure it is in good repair at all times.

The children's lunches will be stored in the fridge.

The water temperature will be checked each morning prior to commencement of the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted of

1. The kettle removed from the countertop in the kitchenette space.
- 2-4. A copy of the daily risk checklist for the outdoor area.
5. The wooden house removed from the garden.
6. Children's lunches stored in the fridge.
7. Image of a thermometer with a water temperature reading of 42.7°C.

Summary Comment

The Early Years Inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions and evidence submitted and deems it to meet compliance under Regulation 23. The registered provider advised that evidence will be sent to the office of the Early Years inspectorate of the repaired/replaced wooden panels due to be completed over the Christmas holidays.

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) Evidence was provided that two adults had training in first aid for children with an expiry of April and June 2023.
- (2)(a) The first aid boxes were stored in a conspicuous position on the wall in the preschool room, on a high shelf and in the new outdoor play area and were clearly labelled.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available at all times in the pre-school service should a child require treatment.

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) A record was maintained to advise of the monthly fire drills which have been carried out on the premises with the last recorded drill recorded on 06th of October 2022.
- (b) A record was maintained of the service record of the firefighting equipment which was last carried out on 25/11/2021 and the service record of the smoke alarm which was carried out on 12/07/2022.
- (2) The records were 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 fire procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a prominent position on the notice board at the entrance area of the room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service provided evidence of insurance to cover 22 children on a part-time basis and 22 School aged children at any one time with a commencement date of 28/03/2022 to expire on 27/03/2023.