

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015RN041
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Name of Service:	Patricia's Montessori
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Address of Service:	The Enterprise Hub, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon
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Eircode:	F45 AC96
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Name of Registered Provider:	Patricia Buckley
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	n/a
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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 a privately operated childcare service since 2013. It caters for children from 2 to 6 years and operates from 9:30hrs -12:30hrs Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The pedagogy of the service is a predominately Montessori curriculum. The service is located in a large room in the local community enterprise centre. There are two outdoor play areas available for children's play, one with direct access from the preschool room and an additional grassed area located to the front of the premises.

Staffing

Three adults including the registered provider work directly with the children on a daily basis.

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, deputy 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) The service did have a person in charge and a designated deputy person in charge. On arrival the designated deputy person in charge was on site in the service. The Registered Provider who is the designated person in charge arrived on site at 10.20hrs.
- (b) The designated deputy person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the registered provider or the deputy person in charge are available on the premises, at all times, when the pre-school children were present.
- (2) The three staff files were reviewed
- (a)(b) Two written validated references were on file for each adult and were provided from past employers.
- (c) 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) Not applicable as no adult had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period in excess of six months.
- (4) The three staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 or over, in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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) On the day of the inspection, there were two adults caring for ten children from 09:00 to 10:20hrs and there were three adults caring from the children from 10:20 to 12:30hrs. The children in attendance were aged between three to five years.
- (3) The appropriate adult/child ratio was maintained throughout 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 staff encouraged and supported the children to be as independent, as possible.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The staff complied with the service's healthy eating policy.
- It was observed that the children consumed their snack at 11.15am. There was evidence of healthy eating with the children consuming a selection of fresh fruit to include apples, strawberries, grapes, raisins, blackberries, oranges, apples, crackers, rolls, croissants, sandwiches and yoghurts. Juice and water were available as drinks.
- The snack time was unhurried and the staff were available to assist if required during snack time.
- There was a cosy area in the preschool room 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.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the playroom and the outdoor play area throughout the session.
- 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 could move about freely and explore their environment. The children were observed at free play, stacking, at artwork, dancing to action songs, doing Montessori exercises and at messy play.

The staff read stories and children questioned the characters and gave their views. The staff used visual aids and probed with questions such as 'who is this?' 'how many are there?', and 'where is that?'. The staff acknowledged a child's achievements, and the children were observed having fun.

In the outdoor area, the children played at the sand tray, on the slide, at the play kitchen and on push along trikes/ bicycles, walking, running, and catching bubbles.

- 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 communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language,
 - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making 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,
 - providing opportunities for children to learn from each other and with each other, to work together, join in and contribute to projects and tasks,
 - working 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.
- 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.

Physical And Material Environment

- The pre-school room was spacious, bright and colourful. The room was laid out with clearly defined areas of play to include a storage unit with an abundance of arts and crafts supplies to include paint, glue, brushes foam shapes, scissors, glitter, sponges, stampers, paper and card.
- Large and small-scale construction (plastic and wooden blocks) and manipulative materials; picture books, problem solving toys (e.g. jigsaws), role and pretend play (e.g. a play kitchen, dolls and accessories, a doll’s bath with towels) and small world toys (e.g. play animals, transport toys, play figures).
- An extensive selection of Montessori equipment to include materials to support practical life exercises, sensorial materials, an early introduction to history, geography, early language and maths were provided.

- A soft matted area with cushions was provided as a reading area should a child wish to relax or opt out of activities.

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 main entrance door was secure to prevent unauthorised entry.
- The external play area to the front of the premises was secure so that children could not leave the area unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area.
- All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to the children.
- Leads, cables, and flexes were wall mounted and secured to prevent any trip or strangulation hazard.
- The heating system was thermostatically controlled, to ensure the temperatures were maintained between 18°C to 22°C.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Daily records of attendance were kept for all the children attending the service.

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
- Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of liquid soap.
- The playroom had cleaning products and 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. The adults were observed regularly washing their hands including after disposing of tissues into bins.
- 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.

- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled and in designated storage containers.
- The nappy changing area had a leak-proof, sealable airtight container for the disposal of nappies.
- The nappy changing policy was displayed on the wall of the nappy changing area.
- There were cleaning schedules and records for the playroom, sanitary areas, and outdoor area.
- Tabletops and work surfaces were cleaned with disposable paper towels and disinfectant spray.
- The playroom was observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows open whilst maintaining the room temperature at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playroom.

Administration of Medication:

- It was advised by the staff presently no child is on 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.

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 service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Two adults had current training in first aid responder training.

(2)(a) The first aid box was appropriately stocked with items safely stored and easily accessible by the adults in a conspicuous position on a high shelf in the preschool room.

(b)The service demonstrated that the first aid box was available to the children attending 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)(a)A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service.

The last recorded fire drill was on 13/02/2025.

(b)Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 03/10/2024.

The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 12/10/2024.

(4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 27/03/2025 covered the following,

public liability,

personal accident,

insurance against fire and theft,

outings undertaken as part of the service provision.