

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY005
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Name of Service:	Ardcroney Montessori
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Address of Service:	C/O National School, Ardcroney, Nenagh, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 VH01
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Name of Registered Provider:	Teresa Mulroy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	28/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary, E45A099
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney
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	N/A
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Description of service

This sessional service was established to provide care and education to children aged 2 – 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided. The sessional service operates Monday to Friday, 9.15am to 12.15pm for 38 weeks of the year. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from a large room in Ardcroney National School in the village of Ardcroney in north Tipperary. The room has its own entrance and separate sanitary accommodation areas to those used by the school children and staff. There is also a kitchen directly accessible from the room. An enclosing fence and gate separate the area near the entrance door from the rest of the school grounds, creating a safe outdoor play area for the pre-school children.

Staffing

The registered provider and another member of staff work directly with the children in the service each day. Both staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 7 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(3)(8), 15, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25 and 26.

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 and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

The staff files of both members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of one member of staff.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of one member of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of both members of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. There was a process in place to ensure that staff were re-vetted on a three-yearly basis in line with the requirements of the Early Years Inspectorate.

(d) Police vetting had been carried out in respect of the staff members who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months and relevant documents were kept on file.

(4) Both staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 7 or 8 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.

(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) There were 2 staff working directly with 9 children aged between 3 and 5 years old for the duration of the session.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 to 5, which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 to 11.

(8)(c) There were two staff present in the service when it was in operation. In the event that there were only one staff working in the service, the school principal could be called on to provide assistance in an emergency.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

The registration forms of the 11 children enrolled in the service were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(1) The required information, as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation, were maintained in writing in respect of each child attending the service.

(3)(c) The records were available in the service for inspection by an authorised person.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children had daily access to indoor play and exploration in a large, bright, well-resourced room and outdoor play in an enclosed outdoor play area. The room had high ceilings and was spacious, providing children and staff with ample room to move around freely. On the day of the inspection, during work time, there was sufficient space for both staff to support the children in different parts of the room while the rest of the room was available to the children who engaged in activities of choice at the other tables.

The activity room was divided into two main areas by the use of furniture such as low-level shelving units. The upper part of the room was set up for the pre-school children while the lower part of the room was primarily set up for the school age care service, with some areas of interest used by both services, such as the planting table. There were a number of clearly defined interest areas which included: Montessori area, imaginative play areas, table-top activities and dining area, library and relaxation area, small world areas, puzzles and manipulative play areas.

The children's art work, photos and posters of interest were displayed on wall-mounted notice boards around the room.

(b) Sleep facilities were not required as all of the children were aged over 3 years old and attended the service for 3 hours each day. There was a cosy area beside the library where the children could rest and relax when they wanted to. This area had a large, padded gym mat for the children to sit on.

(3)(a) The children had access to an enclosed outdoor play area, separated from the rest of the school grounds by a wall, fence and gate. The ground surface was tarmacadam with a concrete ramp and path to the entrance door of the pre-school. The children also had access to the school playing pitch around which there was a walking path.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service was well equipped with furniture, toys and resources. There were wooden tables that were pushed together to make larger tables for group work, table-tops activities and dining or used alone for one-to-one work and activities. There were also plastic tray tables used for special interest activities such as spring planting. There were a range of sizes of chairs for use by the children and the adults. Extra tables and chairs were stacked and stored away for use when required.

Most of the toys and material were displayed on wooden, open shelving units or in units with sliding plastic drawers which were easy for the children to access. Other furniture included the play kitchen and shop, clothing rails for dress up clothing, graduated display shelves for books and a work bench.

Equipment and materials were well maintained. In line with the Montessori ethos, children were taught to respect the materials they used and to tidy them away and return them to the shelves when they had finished with them. There was a side room off the main room that was used for storage of additional toys and materials that were not currently in use such as seasonal resources and outdoor play materials.

The children brought toys outside from the storage area when going to the outdoor play area. Outdoor resources and toys included push toys, balls, gardening tools, hoops, obstacle course resources and chalk.

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. Parents supplied the food eaten by their children while attending the service. The children and staff sat and ate together at snack time. Foods eaten on the day of inspection included: bagels, crackers, sandwiches, wraps, cheese, yoghurt, sausage, carrot sticks and fruit (mandarins, watermelon, apples, bananas, grapes, strawberries and blueberries). The children brought their own drink bottles of water which they could access throughout the morning. Staff refilled the bottles with water from the kitchen when required. Perishable foods were stored in a fridge in the kitchen.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

Compliance Information

(1) The staff were responsible for recording the arrival and departure times of the children in the daily attendance book.

(3) The staff met any visitors to the service at the entrance door before allowing them admission to the service if appropriate.

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 held current certification in first aid responder (FAR), valid until 23 February 2026.

(2)(a) There were two suitably equipped first aid boxes stored in a designated cupboard in the activity room.

Additional supplies for restocking the first aid boxes were available in the kitchen.

(b) The first aid boxes were available if required by a child while attending the 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 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) There was a written record of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service, most recently on 19 December 2024.

(b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced annually, most recently in September 2024.

(4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed on the wall in the main room.