

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY020
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Name of Service:	Clever Clogs Montessori
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Address of Service:	Presentation Primary School, Mitchell Street, Thurles, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E41 V967
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Name of Registered Provider:	Breda Byrne, Elizabeth McGrath
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	18
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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 and H Sutherland
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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 part time service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided. The service operates from 08.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour session, funded under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for eligible children.

The service is located in two rooms on the first floor of the Presentation Primary school in the town of Thurles in north Tipperary. The children have access to two care rooms, the school's shared resources such as the 'red room', hall and 'wobble room', sanitary accommodation area and outdoor play areas.

Staffing

The registered providers work directly with the children in the service each day. One of the two registered providers was present in the service on the day of inspection. There are four staff employed to work in the service including staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). All staff held appropriate qualifications to work in a pre-school service.

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)(2)(4)(8), 19(1)(b), 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26(1)(4) and 28.

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 inspectors wish 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 the six members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated, past employer references were available in respect of five members of staff.

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

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. The service had a system in place to ensure that staff were re-vetted on a three-yearly basis in line with the requirements of TUSLA.

(d) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

(4) All staff held recognised qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5, 6 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.

(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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

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

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) On the morning of the inspection there were 5 staff working directly with 22 children aged between 3 and 6 years old between 2 rooms as follows: there were 16 children and 2 staff in the big room, 6 children and 2 staff in the small room and the registered provider worked between both rooms. By the afternoon there were 18 children being cared for by 5 staff. The number of staff present reduced to 4 while staff took their 15-minute break in rotation around midday.

(2) The adult to child ratio was maintained at higher than the minimum requirements throughout the period of the inspection.

(4) The adult to child ratio was maintained at 1 to 5 in the morning and 1 to 4 in the afternoon which was greater than the minimum requirements of 1 to 11 during the morning session and 1 to 8 for a part-time service.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present at all times while the service was in operation.

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-

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

The atmosphere at mealtime was relaxed with pleasant social interaction among staff and children. Children brought in their own lunches and staff were aware of children's individual needs and provided support when required. Children's drinks were stored on low level shelving and available and accessible when required. Children were encouraged to manage their own personal care for example, wiping their nose, washing their hands after using the toilet and putting on their own coats.

Staff were observed to interact with the children in a respectful manner, for example using soft tones, using the children's names and getting down to their level making eye contact. Staff listened to the children's voices for example, picking up on verbal and non-verbal cues. These interactions can support children to form and sustain positive relationships.

Children were provided with opportunities for small and large group activities and play. For example, small groups of children were taken to the 'wobble room' which was a soft play room separate to the care rooms. Providing opportunities for small and large group play supported children to build positive relationships with one another. Children had the opportunity to move freely around the care room and the outdoor area, explore their environment and practice their skills such as coordination and balance.

Smooth transitions were facilitated within the service, for example staff made children aware that a transition was coming and encouraged each child to choose a toy from the care room to take outside with them.

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 access to a range of indoor environments and outdoor play spaces on a daily basis. The main spaces used by the children were two adjoining care rooms, one large and one small. The main room was used primarily by the older children in the morning while the smaller room was used by the younger children or those who benefitted from being in a smaller group. In the afternoon, the children could choose which room they wanted to be in. The children also had access to the facilities of the school on a timetabled basis which included use of the 'red room', school hall and the 'wobble room'. The 'red room' was a resource room that could be used for movement breaks, small group work and a change of environment. The school hall was available for physical play and activity for 30 minutes, 3 days per week. The 'wobble room' was a movement and sensory play resource attached to the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) pre-school within the school and made available to the service for 30 minutes, 3 days per week plus everyday between 12pm and 1pm.

The care rooms and outdoor area were well organised, clean and free of clutter and arranged to support the development and well-being of the children. There was opportunity for children to engage in a variety of play such as, imaginary, sensory, creative, fine and gross motor and opportunities for risk taking.

(b) An area with a mat and cushions was provided to allow children to comfortably take a rest. There was a low-level bed and bedding available should a child require sleep throughout the day.

(3)(a) The children had access to an enclosed playground within the school grounds, which they shared with another early years service that was also located in the school. The playground was divided into two spaces so

that both services could use it at the same time. The services swapped sides each week so that the children benefitted from using all of the equipment and resources available. The ground surface of the area had been covered with artificial grass which acted as an impact absorbing surface under and around the equipment which included climbing equipment. There was also an area of concrete footpath around the sides of the space. The children also had access to the grass areas and ball courts of the school where they went on nature walks, had picnics in the warmer months and played under the mature trees.

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

There was a wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate equipment both indoors and outdoors available to the children throughout the day. For example indoors there were blocks, books, jigsaws, small world play, home corner, stepping pads, a sensory rocker and pull and push along toys. The outdoor area had a mud kitchen, sand box, climbing frames, slides, a wooden bridge, bikes, a chalkboard, buggies and trolleys. On the day of inspection the staff brought out a bubble making machine which filled the space with bubbles that the children chased and popped. The 'wiggle room' had a large ball pool, climbing walls, padded flooring, mirrors and bean bags.

Materials and equipment were stored on low level shelving which supported children to use them independently. Individual storage boxes were provided for children to store and access their own belongings. There was a sufficient number of age-appropriate tables and chairs available to the children. Chairs were also available for use by the staff.

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. The children brought food from home to be consumed during the day. Children who attended on a part-time basis brought sufficient food for the meal breaks in the morning and afternoon. Children who attended on a sessional basis brought food to be eaten at the morning break. Children brought their own drink bottles, which they could access during the day when they wanted a drink. The bottles were re-filled with water when empty.

Foods eaten on the day of inspection included: fromage frais, crackers, bread rolls, wraps, pancakes, crackers, cheese, pasta salad, brown bread, sausage roll, rice cakes and fruit (blueberries, bananas, grapes, mandarins, strawberries and fruit puree).

The staff were aware of the children who had food allergies and special dietary requirements.

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

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The staff were responsible for checking the children in and out of the service each day. They used an electronic application designed for recording the daily attendance.

(3)(a) Staff met visitors at the entrance door of the service before allowing them entry if appropriate.

(b) A written record was maintained of any visitors to the service, also using the electronic application.

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) There were three members of staff present on the day of inspection who held current certification in first aid responder (FAR). A fourth member of staff, who was not present on the day of inspection, also held current FAR certification.

(2)(a) Two suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored on a shelf in the small care room.

(b) The first aid boxes were available if required by a child 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 3 March 2025.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. Firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on a yearly basis, most recently in August and September 2024, respectively.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed on the back of the entrance door to the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had current insurance to cover for a part-time service with up to 34 children attending at any one time, valid until 27 March 2025.