

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY075
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	The Old School House Montessori
-------------------------	---------------------------------

Address of Service:	Pouldine, Thurles, Co Tipperary
----------------------------	---------------------------------

Eircode:	E41 EV50
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Regina Flanagan, Rose O'Sullivan
-------------------------------------	----------------------------------

Service type:	Part Time
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	27/03/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	-
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	---

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary E45 A099
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney and G Kavanagh
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
---------------------------------	-----

Description of service

This service was established in 2014 to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service is registered for part-time hours (up to 5 hours per day). On the day of inspection all of the children attended for a three-hour session only. This session is operated between 9am and 12pm, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year and places are funded under the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

The service is operated from a single storey, detached premises that was formerly used as a primary school located in a rural area outside the town of Thurles in north Tipperary. The premises was fully renovated and refurbished for use as an early years service. The children have access to three activity rooms, sanitary accommodation areas and an enclosed outdoor play area.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service on a daily basis with four other members of staff, including two staff employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). All staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 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/. 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), 19(1)(a)(b), 24(1)(3), 25 and 26(1)(4), however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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 five members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

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

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

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of all members of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

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

(4) Staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) Two written, validated references from a past employer or other source were not available in respect of one member of staff.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a) Two references were acquired for the new staff member. The service stated they will keep records up to date, especially regarding new staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)(a) Copies of two written, validated references were received by post in the offices of the early years inspectorate on 21 August 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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)-

(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) There were 4 staff working directly with 29 children in 3 groups when the inspectors arrived in the service on the morning of the inspection. When the registered provider returned to the service a short time later, the number of staff working with the children increased to five. The children were aged between 3 and 5 years old and all attended on a sessional basis on the day of the inspection.

(3) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the recommended ratios throughout the inspection, including when the registered provider was absent from the service for a short time to collect daffodils.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service while it 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-

(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

(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

(1)(a) The following was observed on the day of inspection through direct observation, review of records and discussions with the staff:

Basic needs:

The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors and outdoors.

The children had access to their drink bottles at all times. The bottles were refilled with water as required. The children brought food to eat at snack time.

The sanitary accommodation areas were located within each of the activity rooms to support the children's independence in using the toilet when they needed to. Nappy changing was carried out as needed for the children who were not yet toilet trained.

Supporting relationships:

There was a lot of evidence of supporting relationships with the children observed in the classroom on the day of inspection. The children had been encouraged to make cards for Mother's Day and staff wrote personal messages on the cards as dictated by each child.

Child-led, open-ended conversation was observed by staff when speaking to the children.

Warmth and sensitivity was demonstrated in interactions with the children. One of the staff read aloud to all the children from a story book about love. She explained to the children examples of love, in being kind to each other and in relationships they have with their own family and friends.

Staff ensured that parents were kept informed of how their children were getting on in the service through weekly records in each child's communication book. The child's key worker wrote in the individual book of each child under their care which was sent home every Friday with the work the child had done that week. Parents could add their own comments and observations to the book. The service also used a messaging application for communication with parents.

The service welcomed visitors from the community into the service including parents who came to tell the children about their jobs, such as nursing, and the local priest who visited weekly. Other recent visitors to the service were the librarian from the local library who had started to visit pre-schools in the area for story time, a magician from the national childhood cancer charity 'Oscar's Kids Ireland' who performed a magic show and an annual visit from the Garda dog unit.

Physical and material environment:

The indoor environment included three activity rooms: one used by the older children, one by the younger children and the third which was available to all children for imaginative and sensory play. All of the children enjoyed playing in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.

Each room was set up to support the children to learn through exploration and play. Toys and materials were arranged in interest areas such as the art area, construction area, cosy area, library area, imaginative play area and Montessori area.

There were child sized chairs and tables in the centre of the two main rooms used by the children. These were used for dining and table-top activities.

The outdoor area had two covered sections: a covered area near the entrance door and the concrete shelter in one corner of the outdoor area, which had been the 'lunch shed' of the old school. These spaces enabled the children to play outdoors in all weathers.

Outdoor equipment included a playhouse, digging area with push vehicles, raised planting beds, a barrel-shaped cubby house/shelter, wall-mounted blackboard, seating areas and slide.

Programme of activities:

There was evidence of short, medium and long term planning in the service. Staff were responsive to the children's emerging interests when planning the curriculum.

The service was involved with the 'Wibbly Wobbly Balance Bike Programme' through Tipperary Sports Partnership. The service received eight balance bikes and helmets for six weeks as part of the scheme which encouraged the development of balance and bike skills. On the day of inspection, the children were really enjoying being on the bikes and learning to cycle.

There were photos of the children engaged in activities included in their communication books. One of the activities engaged in before Christmas was the Christmas Market, where the children set up stalls of things they had made to 'sell' to their friends.

(1)(b) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children:

During the week the staff had been helping the children to decorate pots to plant daffodils in as a gift for Mother's Day. Many of the children demonstrated pride in successfully planting the flowerpot and making cards for Mother's Day. As the children would bring home their Mother's Day gift on Friday, the rest of the children's work and their communication book were sent home on the day of inspection so that the children could manage what they had to carry without fear of dropping something.

The staff members readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments, focusing on children's actions, interactions and play activities.

The staff were observed to know the children well and to respond quickly and sensitively to their needs. For example, on the day of inspection, one of the children was upset and a member of staff was observed comforting him. She then brought him outside to play as this was one of his favourite 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 service was kept secured by gates at the front and back which prevented unauthorised access to the site and prevented children from gaining unsupervised access to the roadway to the front and side of the premises. The gate at the front was the main one used for accessing the premises. This gate was controlled by an electronic magnetic mechanism.

An impact absorbent ground surface covered the section of outdoor play area where the slides were placed.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

Garda vetting for four of the five members of staff was carried out longer than three years ago. Re-vetting of staff is required to be carried out on a three-yearly basis.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

Garda vetting renewal was applied for in respect of the four staff whose vetting was out of date.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of current garda vetting for staff was received via post to the offices of the early years inspectorate on 21 August 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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 recording the arrival and departure times of the children using the weekly attendance sheet that was kept at the reception desk in the entrance hall.

(3)(a) Staff met visitors to the service at the entrance gate before allowing them access to the service if appropriate.

(b) A record was maintained of any visitors to the service.

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 two members of staff present on the day of inspection who held current certification in First Aid Responder (FAR), valid until 15 October 2026.

(2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box was available in the kitchen where it could be easily accessed when required.

(b) The first aid box was 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 28 February 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 was serviced annually, most recently on 14 October 2024.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) The smoke alarm system had not been serviced since 2020. Smoke alarm systems must be serviced at least once a year. The exact servicing schedule will be determined by the qualified person carrying out the task.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were not displayed in the service. The notice is required to be displayed in a prominent place in each room to support the safety of the staff and children in the event of a fire.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b) The smoke alarm was serviced on 5 September 2025.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire has been displayed on the wall in the service

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(b) A copy of the certificate was sent to the early years inspector via text message on 5 September 2025.

(4) A copy of the notice now displayed in the service was received by post in the offices of the early years inspectorate on 21 August 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.