

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY130
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Name of Service:	Marthas Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Castle Heights, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E32 VP49
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Name of Registered Provider:	Martha O'Shea
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/02/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	7	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Glenmorgan Building, Ferryhouse, Clonmel, Tipperary.
Inspection undertaken by:	E Cullen
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

The service offers a sessional programme five days per week over 38 weeks per year. Established in 2006 the service caters for children from 2 to 6 years of age between the hours of 9:15am to 12:45pm. Located in the urban area of Carrick-on-Suir, the premises occupies the ground floor of a two-storey building. Accommodation includes a single early years classroom, sanitary accommodation, and entrance lobby. The outdoor area is directly accessible from the classroom to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs two staff members who work directly with children. The registered provider also works with children in the service. Staff members held qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care at Level 5, 6, and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications. On the day of inspection, the registered provider was working in their second service Martha's Montessori in Clonmel.

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 and 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) – Management and Recruitment, 11 (1)(3) – Staffing levels, 19 (1)(b) - Health, welfare and development of child, 26 – Fire safety

measures and 28 - Insurance; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 25 – First Aid and 29 - Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider 23 February 2024 to address a non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 – First Aid. A response received from the registered provider was adequate to address the non-compliance.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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

(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

(2) Documentation was reviewed for the two staff members employed by the service and the registered provider.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available for one staff member and the registered provider from either a past employer, or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) Certificates of qualification were available on file demonstrating that staff members held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) Two validated references were not available one staff member from either a past employer, or from a reputable source.

(d) International police vetting was not available for one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period over 6 months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

2(a)(b) References have been sourced. An update on all staff including casual has been undertaken and has been included as part of the managers quarterly term time administration work.

(d) Staff member has begun the application process for the vetting. The registered provider has educated themselves on the employment of staff that may have lived out of the country for a period of time.

Supporting documentation submitted

2(a)(b) References

(d) Photograph with record of application for international vetting.

Summary Comment

References submitted meet the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. The requirements for international police vetting are in progress and will be assessed on next inspection.

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 inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children.

(3) The staff to child ratios were maintained above the minimum requirements. There were 7 children aged 2 to 6 years being cared for by 2 staff.

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

(1)(a)

Staff members were observed to treat the children with respect and positive regard. They sat with children in small groups or individually, engaged in conversation with and listened attentively to the children as they spoke. An example of this was observed as a child sat with one of the staff members to complete a series of jigsaw puzzles. There was discussion on the contents of the puzzles and the process to complete same. The staff member skilfully provoked curiosity by asking questions and facilitating a discussion with the child. Empathy and compassion were encouraged among the group, one child was observed to be upset and as a staff member comforted them, another child asked if they needed a tissue. The child then retrieved a tissue for their friend and supported them along with the staff member.

Strategies were in place to support children to transition from one activity to the next, for example, getting ready to go outdoors and before morning snack. A helper chart was observed in use, one child was chosen as line leader and other children handed out children's drinks for snack time. Transitions were successfully coordinated through use of visual schedules, traffic light systems, music and timers. Children who required support with transitions were given the time and the space they required; staff members demonstrated a keen awareness of the needs of children in the group.

Parent and guardian communication during collection and drop off periods, provided an opportunity for staff to share information with parents. Additional methods of communication such as phone calls, a multimedia messaging application were used to share information, and photographs.

Parent and guardian involvement in the service was evidenced through photographs and communication of recent events. The week prior to the inspection the service celebrated 'Pancake Tuesday' and held an event to mark 'Fat Thursday' a Polish celebration in recognition of members of the Polish community who are enrolled in the service.

In December the service held a day to 'celebrate someone you love' where children were invited to bring someone they love to the service for a morning of crafting and activities, followed by a visit from Santa Claus.

The service has made links with the local community. The service had a recent visit from a local member of An Garda Síochana and the Red Cross. The children undertake regular outings, including a trip to the local library for story time with a local author. The nearby castle and fire station have been visited by the children recently. On trip to the castle staff members bring dress up materials to support the children to engage in role play. Such activities support the children attending the service to make connections with the wider community.

The service is implementing an inclusion policy and this was evident in their practices during the inspection. The environment is inclusive and representative of the children attending the service, with images of the children and their families displayed. Adjustments to the learning environment and teaching strategies were used to support the learning and development of all children attending 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) A person certified in a recognised PHECC First Aid Response (FAR) course was not available on the premises on the day of inspection. An immediate action notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 23 February 2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Lead staff member has completed an emergency First Aid Cert and a FAR Refresher course. All other staff members are completing First Aid on 22 April 2024. A second staff member is to be trained in FAR as soon as a course becomes available sometime before end of year.

Supporting documentation submitted

A paediatric training certificate and booking confirmation of a FAR training for one staff member was submitted to the early years inspectorate on 26 February 2024 in response to the IAN.

Evidence of additional first aid training bookings for staff members.

Summary Comment

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

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) Records confirmed that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service.

(4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed beside each emergency exit door on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) Documentation available demonstrated that annual maintenance was not completed on the firefighting equipment which was last serviced in March 2022 and there were no records available to confirm when the smoke alarm system was last serviced.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b) Fire extinguisher maintenance was carried out on 26 February 2024. The registered provider has entered into a contract with a smoke alarm maintenance firm. A date for maintenance has been booked however works have yet to be completed.

Fire maintenance has been added to the quarterly check list for management.

Supporting documentation submitted

Certificate of completion of fire extinguisher maintenance.

Communication from the registered provider confirming that a new contract has been taken out with a smoke alarm maintenance firm.

Summary Comment

Once works are completed the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 will be met. This will be assessed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated insurance cover for a Montessori catering for 22 children. The insurance policy commenced 28 November 2023 and will expire 27 November 2024.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

1. The outdoor all-weather surface was visibly dirty, had protruding weeds and required maintenance.
2. Timber cable reels used by children required maintenance, there was a visible build-up of moss and grime.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A general clean-up of the garden has taken place over the Easter holidays. The astro turf needs to be removed and an alternative surface decided on. Ongoing research is happening, and any works taken on will occur over the summer break in the interest of the school calendar.
2. All grubby equipment will be power hosed or removed. New spools are being made.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. No evidence submitted.

2. Photograph of new cable reel.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted for point two above meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Planned works completed in respect of point one above on the outdoor area will be assessed on next inspection.