

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH029			
Name of Service:	Mullingar Montessori & After School Care Ltd			
Address of Service:	Ardmore Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath			
Eircode:	N91 C434			
Name of Registered Provider:	Ursula Keenan			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time			
Date 1 of Inspection:	04/10/2023			
Date 2 of Inspection:	05/10/2023			
No of pre-school children:	AM	102	PM	45
Date 2 of Inspection:		96		49

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy
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

Mullingar Montessori & After School Ltd is registered as a full day care service with a capacity for 118 pre-school children aged between 2 – 6 years. The service is open Monday to Friday and is operated by an independent provider. A school aged childcare service is provided in the afternoon.

The Early Years' Service operates from two co- located buildings. Area one is single storey and purpose-built consisting of four pre-school rooms, a sluice room, a kitchen, an office and staff sanitary accommodation.

Area two is single storey and prefabricated consisting of two pre-school rooms and a staff room.

An administration office is separately located between the two buildings.

A large outdoor play area is attached to the front of the service. Onsite parking and set down facilities are provided. The service is in an urban setting in a residential area in the town of Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Staffing

There were twenty-four adults present on various rostered duties on October 4th and 5th 2023 including childcare practitioners, support staff, the office administrator, supervisor and a cook. The registered provider who provides a support role in the service was not present during the two inspection days.

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 co-operation of the persons 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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)

A designated person in charge and a person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

A designated person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.

Thirty-two files were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers in respect of the staff members.

(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from a source other than a past employer in respect of the staff members.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of six staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Twenty staff members held a major award at levels 5 to 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d)

Police vetting was not available in respect of two staff members who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Two staff members did not hold a major award at level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d)

The two employees that were identified as requiring international police vetting applied on the day of the inspection to the countries highlighted.

One vetting for one staff member has been received and forwarded. The outstanding police vetting's for two employees are currently at application stage with the two employees currently engaged in the application processes.

During the recruitment process, at the interview stage, heightened attention will be given to applicants who the service is intending to hire to ensure they have provided the service with all the necessary vetting requirements from countries identified on the curriculum vitae. (Completed international police vetting and International police vetting applications included)

(4)

On the day of the inspection when the question was raised as to the two staff members qualifications they were automatically moved to auxiliary positions while we undertook an investigation into their qualifications.

When it was concluded that their qualifications were not fully compliant the two staff members concluded their employment to undertake studies to complete their studies and obtain qualifications.

The two positions have since been filled with returning employees to the service with required full qualifications.

During the recruitment process, at the interview stage, heightened attention will be given to applicant's qualifications to ensure that the service is provided with the overall qualification certificate as opposed to certs for individual modules undertaken during their studies.

Summary Comment

The corrective action should meet the regulatory requirement. The registered provider will submit the evidence to the Early Years Inspector of the required police vetting's upon receipt. The regulatory requirement will be met when the registered provider submits the evidence.

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.

(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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

On the 05 October 2023 there were ninety-six children attending the service supervised directly by nineteen adults.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

Information for parents was available in a parent handbook and shared with parents prior to commencement in the service in respect of Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured a copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013) of the Act and Regulations was available for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Parents provide their child with the midmorning snack. A cook prepares the main meal on site in line with the daily menu plan. The main meal consisted of spaghetti bolognese, containing minced beef, a vegetable-based tomato sauce and pasta. Water and milk to drink were offered to children. The afternoon snack consisted of a selection of brown bread or bread sticks with a variety of fruit. Breakfast was available in the service if required. Conversations and interactions between children and staff were observed during snack and mealtimes. Children went to the toilet independently and were supervised and assisted where necessary. Staff reminded children to wash their hands after using the toilet. Regular nappy changes were carried out. The staff were familiar with each child and their personality. Staff members were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. Staff worked in partnership with parents. For the children attending on a full day care basis a communication diary is used to record information relating to each child's day. This information was provided to the parents as part of a verbal handover on the child's day at collection time. Play equipment and materials were accessible to children and individual preferences were accommodated as to what and how long children wish to engage with specific chosen activities. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences were available for all children indoors and outdoors. Materials included paint, play dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws and shape sorters. Children's artwork was noted and paper, crayons, paint and a variety of open-ended art materials were in plentiful supply.

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 19 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)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts and home corners.

(b)

Low level beds were available in the service for any child over the age of two years who required rest or sleep. Soft furnishings were in place in each pre-school room to support rest and relaxation.

(3)(a)

A large outdoor play area was attached to the front of the service. The area was secured by perimeter fencing, foliage and plastic fencing and gates. Artificial grass and mulch surface areas were in place. The outdoor area was equipped with a variety of bikes, trikes, and a cycle lane. Wooden constructed units consisting of a “post office” “shop” and “ship” supported children’s imaginative play. A secure pet zone with chickens and a rabbit was in place. Goal posts were in place and a variety of benches. A sheltered area provided the children with year-round opportunities for outdoor play.

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 entrance doors to the service were secure to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. Safety checklists were available for review.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed.

Warm water, electric hand dryers and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature at the wash hand basins was recorded at between 32 and 34 degrees Celsius. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and meals and after using the toilet.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school rooms for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

No medicine was given at the time of the inspection. A temperature reducing medication was available if a child presented with a high temperature. The medication was stored correctly in the service. Emergency care plans were in place for children with a defined medical condition. Individual record sheets recorded the required details to support the safe administration of medicine.

Safe Sleep:

Staff members remained in the room with children over the age of two who availed of rest and sleep in the afternoon.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exit routes and signage were in place in the service. Fire exit routes were free from obstruction. Fire assembly points were noted in the outdoor area.

Outing:

A risk assessment checklist was completed in respect of the end of term outings carried out earlier in the year.

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)

Four staff members were qualified in first aid response (FAR) and were available on the premises.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in an accessible and conspicuous location in the service.

(b)

A fully equipped first aid box was accessible to children.

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)

A written record for the completed fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 14 September 2023.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced in February 2023. The smoke alarms were serviced in January 2023.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted as 27 March 2024.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

Compliance Information

A complaints policy was available for the service which detailed the requirements of Regulation 32 (1)(a)(b)(c)