

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH051
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Name of Service:	Réalta Geal Montessori School
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Address of Service:	12 Church Hill Crescent, Coosan, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 V2T6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mairead Hennessy
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	20/06/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	39	PM	15
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
Inspection undertaken by:	C O' Connor Hughes
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

This service is registered as a part time service operated by a private provider. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 2.5 to 5 years of age. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme.

The Early Years' Service is located on the ground floor of a residential apartment block. Three pre-school rooms, an office and a kitchenette are provided. Set down and onsite parking facilities are available. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. The service is urban in its location in a residential area in Coosan, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Staffing

The registered provider and five staff members were working directly with children on the 20 June 2024.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under

Regulation 19 (1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child.

Regulation 20 Facilities for Rest and Play

Regulation 27 Supervision

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the senior pre-school room.

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

The service had recently sought support and engaged with a Quality Childcare Initiative Service.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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

(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.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of "paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)" for "paragraphs (5) and (6)", and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): "

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

Evidence of a clear management structure was available in the service.

Seven staff files including the registered provider was reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

Two written validated references were available in respect of three staff members.

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider and three staff members.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

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

(4)

The staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6A)

Two employees present were working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

References were not validated in respect of three staff members.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All three staff members have now validated references.

Management will do regular checks on staff files.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written references were submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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.

(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)

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

(4)(a)(b)

There were thirty-nine children attending the service supervised directly by four adults and the registered provider.

(8)(a)

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

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)
A sampling process was used and twelve child records were reviewed. Information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g) and (i) was available in respect of the children attending the service.
Seven child records held details in respect of (h).

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(h)
A record of immunisations was not available in respect of five of the twelve records reviewed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All five parents have been contacted and have sent management the vaccinations reports for their children.
All registration forms and vaccinations will be checked prior to re opening in September and management will ensure all children will have a vaccination report filed with their registration forms.

Supporting documentation submitted

Vaccination records submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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)

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) were available and reviewed.

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

A parent handbook was available for parents with relevant information on the service.

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 presented 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 for inspection of (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, and*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Senior pre-school room

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the senior pre-school room.

Children were observed to move between the indoor and outdoor environments enjoying creative play and gross motor activities as well as imaginative and sensory play outdoors. Children were encouraged to be independent as they washed their hands before snacks and mealtimes. Children went to the toilet independently supervised by staff.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child and their personalities. Staff were observed to give comfort and reassurance to the children. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities. Children requiring extra support were offered assistance and one to one support as needed. Access and inclusion plans were available for review. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

The pre-school room was bright and colourful. Children's artwork and photographs were displayed including the children's individual timeline display from birth to date. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences to meet children's learning needs was available for children. Interest areas included a home area, arts and crafts, construction area and sand play area. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving.

The service works in partnership with parents and guardians. Parents were observed to collect their children from the pre-school room after the ECCE session. A verbal handover was provided to parents at this time.

Newsletters are circulated to each family attending the service on a regular basis. A parent's handbook is given to parents at the start of the pre-school term. Social media is a platform also used to communicate with parents. An open introduction to pre-school day is held annually for new children attending the service.

Each child has their own learning journal depicting their child developmental observations, play and work activities. This journal is shared with parents on a regular basis.

The service had made links to the community as the Garda, fire brigade and dental hygienist had visited the service to speak to the children. Transitions for children to national school in September were eased as the principal and teachers had come to the pre-school and introduced themselves to the children.

Evidence indicated that the curriculum planning that supported the Early Childhood Curriculum framework was being implemented.

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)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors which included toys and equipment for tabletop activities, creative, imaginary play, sensory and physical play in the senior pre-school room.

(b)

A cosy rest area with comfortable couches was available for children to rest and relax.

(3)(a)

An outdoor play area was available at the back of the service. The perimeter was surrounded by a high wall and fencing. Toys and equipment included a large wooden structure with climbing steps and a slide, tree stumps, tyres and bicycles. Children were observed to play in the wooden play huts named Garda, shop and post office. A sheltered play area was available with sand play and a play kitchen.

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 front door to the service was locked and secure to keep the children safe within. A bell system was in place for access to 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. The manager safety checklists were maintained in the service.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. Toys and materials were easily cleanable and cleaning records were available and reviewed. Warm running water, soap and hand towels stored in dispensers were available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature at wash hand basins was recorded at 38 degrees Celsius. Openable windows allowed for natural ventilation in the senior pre-school room and associated sanitary accommodation. Foot operated pedal bins were available for the hygienic disposal of waste materials. Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after toileting.

Administration of Medication:

No medication was given at the time of the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was stored safely in the service if a child presented with a high temperature. Health care plans were in place for children requiring a particular medication while attending the service.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed in the service.

Outing:

A risk assessment was available for review in respect of outings undertaken from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Two children were observed with whole grapes for their snack which posed a potential risk of choking. Upon the request of the inspector the staff member cut the grapes in half and gave them to the children to eat.

2. The emergency plan for children with a defined medical condition was not detailed enough as it did not outline the steps to be taken in using the auto adrenaline injector (AAI) and to contact the parents and the emergency services in the event of an anaphylaxis reaction. An anaphylaxis policy was not in place in the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A reminder text message was sent to all parents regarding grapes. Management have attached our newsletter showing that all parents were and are constantly reminded to cut grapes.

Reminder texts will be sent to parents on a regular basis regarding grapes by management.

2. A more detailed care plan has been put in place for the child with a severe medical condition and an anaphylaxis policy has been drafted for the service.

A monthly check will be carried out on the care plan and auto adrenaline injector (AAI), management will do unannounced drills in relation to a child with severe allergies.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Written documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement. The practice stated will be assessed on the next TUSLA inspection.

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 and two staff members were qualified in First Aid Response (FAR).

Four staff members held certificates in emergency first aid.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was located in the senior pre-school room and office.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school 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 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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 20 May 2024.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 22 December 2023 and on the 15 January 2024 respectively.

(4)

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The children in the senior pre-school room were supervised by the staff members in the indoor and outdoor environments and when using the sanitary accommodation.

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. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.