

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015WH078		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Chestnut Hill Montessori School		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Knockanea, Fardrum, Athlone, Co. Westmeath		
<b>Eircode:</b>	N37 CT95		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Lynda Casey		
<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	26/11/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	24	PM 11
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath.		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	K. Murphy		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.		

### Description of service

This part time service is registered to accommodate children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 08:30 and 13:30 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is operated by an independent provider.

The Early Years' Service is attached to the home of the registered provider and consists of one pre-school room. An outdoor play area is attached to the front of the premises. Set down facilities are available. The service is situated on the urban, rural divide in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Athlone, County Westmeath.

### Staffing

Four adults are employed in the service. Three childcare practitioners were present and working directly with children during the inspection. The registered provider was present for a short period but was unable to be present for the duration of the inspection.

### 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 cooperation of the registered provider, designated 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*

*(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 was available in the service.

(b)

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

Four files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available in respect of the files reviewed from past employers or from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the files reviewed. 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 in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff 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.

### 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 ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were twenty-four children attending the service in the morning and eleven children in the afternoon supervised directly by three adults.

(8)(a)

The roster indicated that two adults are present on the premises during the hours of operation.

### 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)

In a sample review of twelve child records for children enrolled to attend the service the details relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) were in place.

## 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

(1)(b)

Healthy snacks and meals were provided for children by their parents. Children were given time to sit and eat their snack while having conversations with their peers. Water was available to children to self-serve throughout the inspection.

Children went to the toilet independently and were assisted where necessary. Staff reminded children to wash their hands after using the toilet. Children were encouraged to be independent while dressing for outdoor play and assisted, when necessary, by staff.

Good teamwork was observed amongst staff. Positive interactions were observed with staff and children. Eye contact was maintained; soft language tones were used and positive praise given to children on the completion of activities.

Children made choices relating to the activities they wished to engage in which included imaginative play and dress up, arts and crafts and play with interlocking plastic bricks. Staff sat with children during tabletop activities. Staff were familiar with children and their personalities.

Staff worked in partnership with parents and a verbal handover was observed at collection time. The service uses a social media application to communicate information directly to parents. A regular newsletter is issued to families detailing activities and events taking place in the service. A learning journal is maintained on each child that includes the children's play and work activities and is shared with the parents at the end of each pre-school term.

### 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 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)

Soft furnishings provided appropriate rest facilities in the pre-school room for any child who wished to avail of rest and relaxation. Low level beds were available if required.

(3)(a)

An outdoor play area was available to the front of the service and accessed directly from the pre-school room. Natural grass and cobble lock surface areas were in place. A metal fence, a wooden fence, foliage and a high-level automated gate secured the perimeter of the outdoor area.

### 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 entry to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

##### Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable and cleaning schedules were available. There was an adequate supply of paper hand towel and liquid soap in the sanitary accommodation. Warm water was noted at the wash hand basins. Hand washing was facilitated before snack time and after self-toileting. The pre-school room and the sanitary accommodation were ventilated by means of mechanical ventilation and openable windows. Foot operated pedal bins were noted in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

##### Administration of Medication:

No medicine was administered during the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available if required by a child with a high temperature.

##### Fire Safety:

The fire exit routes in the premises were unobstructed. An assembly point was located to the front of the premises.

##### Outing:

Risk assessment documentation was available in respect of the annual outing from the service.

## 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.*

*(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.*

### Compliance Information

(1)

The records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a nominated staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) has to be approved by a staff member.

(b)

A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of 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)

Two staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises.

(2)(a)

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

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the 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 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 monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 23 October 2025.

(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 November 2025. The smoke alarms were serviced in December 2024.

(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 2026.