

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC011				
Name of Service:	Árd Na Laoí Montessori School				
Address of Service:	Clogheen, Blarney Road, Cork, Co. Cork				
Eircode:	T23 AW67				
Name of Registered Provider:	Cora Healy				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	22/11/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>10</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	10	PM	N/A
AM	10	PM	N/A		

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork
Inspection undertaken by:	D Prendergast
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	N/A
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Description of service

Árd na Laoí Montessori School is a privately owned sessional service. It is registered to cater for children aged two to six years. This includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which operates over 38 weeks of the year. The service is open from 8.45am to 11.45am each Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. An extra half an hour is provided on Mondays, with opening hours from 8.45am to 12.15pm. Located in a rural area, on the perimeter of Cork city, the service operates from a classroom attached to the registered provider's private residence. Child and staff sanitary facilities are available and there is an outdoor play environment at the rear of the building.

Staffing

The registered provider and a second adult are employed at the setting. Both hold relevant awards in Early Childhood Care and Education. The second adult frequently assists the registered provider with the direct care and education of the children and is the nominated emergency person, on the days when the registered provider operates the service single-handedly.

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, assistant 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*

(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) The person in charge of the early years service was the registered provider. An emergency person was also in place, should their assistance be required at any stage.
- (b) Both the registered provider and the emergency person/assistant were present for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of both adults were assessed for compliance and the following was deemed satisfactory:
- (a) Of the four required written and validated references, two had been provided by past employers.
- (b) The remaining two required references were from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for both staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Not applicable. Following a review of the staff files, there was no evidence that international police vetting was required.
- (4) Written evidence regarding the attainment of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, was on file for both adults, in the form of copies of the relevant certificates.

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)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were involved in the direct care and education of the children.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the requirements of the regulation were adhered to. On the morning of the inspection, there were 10 children, aged 3 to 5 years in attendance, with 2 adults available.
- (8)
- (c) As the service was occasionally operated single-handedly, a named person who lived nearby, had been nominated to assist the registered provider in the event of an emergency.

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:*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) Information regarding the category of service offered and the age range of the children accommodated, was available in writing.
- (h) A six-week sample of child attendance records was assessed and was found to meet the necessary requirements.

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)

Basic needs:

- The children were accommodated to have a mid-morning snack break during the sessional service. It was noted that plenty of time was allocated for the children to enjoy their food and chat with peers. Suitable crockery and individual placemats were also provided.
- Outside of the allocated mealtimes, the children's water bottles were accessible in the low-level fridge in the classroom.
- The children were observed to use the easily accessible toilet facilities in an independent manner, while an adult was available nearby, to provide verbal reminders.
- Children who sought a quiet space to relax could avail of the rest area, which was furnished with chairs, positioned next to a supply of books.
- It was observed that there was adequate indoor space to accommodate the movement of children as they engaged in play and exploration.

Programme of activities:

- The setting followed Montessori pedagogy and implemented an emergent curriculum.
- A long term plan was displayed in the classroom and was noted to cover a range of developmental areas, such as language, maths, art, music, drama and science.

During conversation, the registered provider outlined that this plan was used as a guide during the year, along with flexibility to regularly facilitate and explore the children’s emerging interests. For example, the children had recently followed the transformation of a real caterpillar into a butterfly and there was a variety of photographs and videos available, which documented their experience.

- Individual learning journals were also maintained and were noted to reflect the children’s participation in themed learning, such as *healthy teeth*, *road safety* and *autumn*.
- The inspector was advised that the children had been learning about additional needs and on the morning of the inspection, the service had a visit from a parent and a child, who were accompanied by their assistance dog. During the visit, the children had the opportunity to learn and observe how assistance dogs can help and support children.
- Language development was encouraged through the promotion of regular conversation and discussion. Singing was also observed, as the children prepared for their upcoming Christmas concert.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- Evidence of the service’s Healthy Eating policy was observed in practice, through the range of nutritious snacks that had been provided by the children’s parents or caregivers. Examples of the foods available for the mid-morning meal break included sandwiches, yogurts, crackers and a variety of fruit and vegetables, such as carrot sticks, cucumber and blueberries.
- A nut free policy was in place at the setting, in keeping with a notified allergy. In managing this requirement, the inspector was advised that all parents had been informed regarding the importance of ensuring that nuts were not included among the snacks provided. In addition, staff also monitored ingredient lists, where relevant.
- It was confirmed that if a child expressed that they were hungry in between scheduled mealtimes, they would be facilitated to select a snack from their lunchbox.

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 side gate that provided access to the service was secured when all the children and visitors had arrived at the setting and remained secure when not in use.
- A combination of hedging, fencing and a high-level gate created a secure enclosure of the outdoor play space.
- The first aid box was stored out of the children's reach.
- Fire extinguishers were safely tethered.
- Sanitiser spray was stored on a high-level shelf.
- There were no electrical cables or trailing flexes accessible to the children.
- A shock absorbing surface was in place underneath the climbing frame, in the outdoor play area.

Infection Control:

- Wash hand basins were supplied with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towel dispensers. A foot pedal operated bin was also provided, for the hygienic disposal of used paper towels. The adults ensured that children washed their hands before the mid-morning snack and after cleaning their noses.
- A refrigerator was in use to store the children's snacks before the morning meal break.
- The care room and sanitary facilities were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered on the day of inspection.
- The medication that had been prescribed for one of the children, was found to be safely stored at a height that was accessible only by adults. The medication was also clearly labelled with the relevant child's name and was in-date.
- During conversation, one of the adults demonstrated familiarity with the procedure to be followed, should the administration of this medication be required.

Fire Safety:

- The service's fire exits were maintained free from any obstructions.
- Fire exit signage was clearly illuminated.

Outing:

- Not applicable, as an outing from the service was not undertaken.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider had ensured that a person with up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training, was available to the children throughout the hours of operation. The certification presented for examination indicated that both adults who worked at the service had completed this training, which was valid until 23 November 2025.

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) The monthly fire drills which had been conducted previously were recorded in writing. The most recent fire drill was noted to have been undertaken on 4 November 2024.
- (b) A list of the number and type of firefighting equipment available in the service was documented. According to the servicing records, the firefighting equipment and the wired smoke alarm were both checked on 26 August 2024.

(4) The fire evacuation notice was prominently displayed in the classroom.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The available insurance certificate demonstrated that adequate cover was in place for the sessional service. The current policy was valid until 27 November 2024 and a policy renewal had also been obtained.