

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2016CC016 |
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| Name of Service: | Fermoy Montessori School |
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| Address of Service: | Green Hill, Fermoy, Co. Cork |
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| Eircode: | P61 VX44 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Ida Greehy |
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| Service type: | Sessional |
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| Date of Inspection: | 10/12/2024 |
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| No of pre-school children: | AM | 19 | PM | N/A |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | 13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD5Y |
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| Inspection undertaken by: | E. Friel |
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| Title: | Early Years Inspector |
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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).

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| Conditions if applicable | N/A |
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Description of service

Fermoy Montessori School is a private sessional service in operation since 1971, providing both play based and Montessori Curricula. The service is registered for children aged two years to six years of age and currently accommodates children aged from two years eight months to six years of age. While the service is registered for both a morning and afternoon session only the morning session from 08:45 to 11:45 is in operation facilitating the Early Years Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, Monday to Friday, thirty-eight weeks of the year.

Fermoy Montessori School is located in the urban town of Fermoy in North Cork. It operates from a single storey extension adjoining a family home. It has its own separate entrance and consists of a hallway, off which there is a kitchen, adult toilet, and a large, interconnected care room with three children's toilets. The outdoor play areas are accessible from the rear of the service.

Staffing

There are currently three adults employed to work directly with the children, two of whom were working on the day of inspection including the registered provider.

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 and safety. 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 wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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) The register provider was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise, as required.
 - (b) Both the registered provider and the deputy were observed working in the service while the pre-school children were present.
 - (c) In conversation, staff stated they were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Staff files for all three staff members were reviewed:
- (a) (b) There were six validated references available, four from past employers and two from sources other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the three staff members, demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Staff files viewed on the day indicated that the three staff members had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, ranging from levels 5 to level 7, on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) International police vetting disclosure was unavailable for one staff member who had lived outside of the State as an adult for more than 6 consecutive months. Not having international police vetting disclosure on file poses a risk from staff who have not been appropriately vetted having direct access to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (d) The employee's international vetting is now on file. It was retrieved from a separate file. All vetting required for each employee will be held on the employees recruitment file in future, prior to the commencement of employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (d) An international vetting disclosure was received in the office of the inspectorate for one adult for whom it was required. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (d) has been adequately addressed.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies, procedures and statements reviewed by the inspector and were found to contain the required information;

- Healthy Eating
- Infection Control

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) There was no supervision policy available in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) A new supervision policy is now in place. Staff will receive supervision each term as indicated on the policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) A copy of the new supervision policy was received in the office of the inspectorate. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 10 has been adequately addressed.

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) The registered provider ensured that on the day of the inspection there were an adequate number of staff working with the children in the service.
- (3) There were two staff members working directly with nineteen children on the morning of the inspection.

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.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of eleven records of the pre-school children attending the service were reviewed. The following particulars were found to be compliant; (1) (a) to (i) above.

(3)

(c) The children's pre-school records were reviewed by the inspector on the premises on the morning of inspection.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

- The service promoted healthy eating. Mid-morning snack served at 10:25 was observed to consist of various fruits, crackers, bread sticks, salami and cheese.
- Each child had an individual plate to place their snack on and a child sized glass tumbler. Water was available throughout the morning.
- Children were observed accessing the sanitary area from the main care room independently, with staff available nearby, if required.
- The rest/quiet area was observed in use throughout the morning. Children were observed resting and playing in the open fabric framed cottage which was furnished with bean bags where the children had access to age and stage appropriate books.
- Children carrying out messy activities, including painting, were observed wearing aprons to protect their clothing.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- During snack staff members sat with the children and engaged in conversation while assisting the children to open packaging. The inspector observed that the atmosphere was noted to be happy and relaxed, and children were given time to finish their snack without being rushed.
- Staff were observed helping children to manage their behaviour by guiding and supporting the children to play cooperatively and listen to each other. These interactions were noted to be calm and respectful, with staff providing thoughtful, consistent and individualised responses.
- Children demonstrated a sense of pride in carrying out their activities successfully during the session and were observed calling on staff members to share their achievements. An example included a child presenting a painting to a staff member who acknowledged and encouraged the child's efforts.
- Staff interactions were warm and caring. The inspector observed a staff member providing physical comfort and talking reassuringly to a child who was tearful during the session.
- Partnership with parents was evident in the emails sent to parents from the registered provider. Examples included a message sent on 23 October to parents/guardians reminding them to send in wellingtons and of the upcoming Halloween party and term time holidays.
- Staff stated informal meetings take place daily and meetings with management occur regularly. Minutes of the last meeting with management dated 4 November 2024 were furnished to the inspector and included items such as planning, Santa, induction, arts and crafts.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The interconnecting care room was laid out in clearly defined areas with toys and resources, including specialised Montessori materials, to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- The area was filled with natural light from the long windows and the children had room to move freely and explore in both the indoor care room and the outdoor play environments.
- Age and stage appropriate tables and chairs were available where the children were observed sitting comfortably participating in group and individual activities.
- The care room was equipped with low-level open shelving units where the children could easily access play equipment and materials which encouraged independence and offered choice.

- The children were observed playing outdoors in an area located at the rear of the service. The ground surface consisted of concrete tiles and a large, grassed area. There were 2 distinct areas. Area 1 where the children were observed playing in had a number of interest areas for the children to play in, including a covered sand area with resources, a covered mulch box with dinosaurs and a mud kitchen. Balance bikes and scooters were also available from a nearby toy box. Area 2 was a grassed area which was not in use on the day of inspection.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Children’s language development was heard being supported throughout the morning in group discussions, songs and storytelling. Examples included a staff member reading books such as “Stickman,” conversations around what ice is made of, and variety of songs sung at circle time which included all of the children’s names and songs requiring physical actions from the children.
- Observations of children, linked to Aistear the curriculum framework, were furnished to the inspector along with learning scrapbooks with themed artwork and photographs of each child involved in activities. Staff stated these are shared with parent’s/guardians.

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 main door was secured upon arrival and the bell was answered by the registered provider ensuring that no unauthorised adult could enter the building.
- Internal doors, to the kitchen and adult sanitary area in the hallway, were secured ensuring the children could not access unsafe areas.
- Doors were fitted with safety devices ensuring that no child could leave the service unsupervised. The inspector observed a child, on two separate occasions, make attempts to open a door to the outdoor play area. The safety device on the door prevented the child from being able to exit from the door without adult assistance.
- Window openings were placed out of reach of the children, preventing any accidents from occurring.
- A hand rail was available in the outdoor play area assisting the children to walk safely down the three steps to the outdoor area.

- Heavy equipment and furniture were secured to prevent them from falling or tipping on top of the children.
- All indoor waste was stored in pedal operated bins.
- Cleaning agents were stored on a high shelf in the care room, out of the reach of the children.
- The outdoor play perimeters were secured by tall hedging, panelled fencing and metal gates with latches. These safety measures ensured that no child could leave the area unsupervised and that no unauthorised adult could enter the area.

Infection Control:

- The wash hand basins, that the children and adults were observed using frequently to wash their hands throughout the morning, were supplied with thermostatically controlled hot water, dispensing soap and paper towels. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the fridge in the kitchen preventing it from spoiling.
- A mobile trolley was available for storing children's coats and bags, away from the floor area.
- Tissues were easily accessible to the children helping to prevent the spread of germs.
- The inspector observed that the tables were sanitised before and after snack and the floors were swept ensuring the areas were kept clean and hygienic.
- Four windows in the care room were open allowing for the circulation of fresh helping to prevent the spread of infection.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medication, stored in its original container, was available in the service's fridge in the locked kitchen.

Safe Sleep:

- No children were observed sleeping while the inspector was on the premises.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed and fitted with thumb twist cylinders and safety devices.
- The fire assembly point in the outdoor play area was visible at the back of the garden, a safe distance from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) The inspector observed that the hinge on the large toy box in the outdoor play area was broken and the door was hanging off, posing a safety risk to the children playing in the area.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) The toy box has been removed and the toys have been moved to the large storage shed. Staff will ensure that storage equipment, in use in the outdoor area, is checked daily.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been addressed.

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) Certificates were on file to evidence that three staff members were trained as First Aid Responders (FAR); two of whom were available while the pre-school children were present in the service.

(2)

(a) (b) First aid boxes were stored within easy reach of the adults in the care room and were observed to be available throughout the morning.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Written records were available of the monthly fire drills which took place in the service. The dates recorded indicated that fire drills had carried out on a monthly basis.
 - (b) Written records were available detailing number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm records were dated 5 September 2024.
- (2)
- (c) Both the firefighting equipment certificate and the smoke alarm certificates were open to review on the day of inspection.
- (4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were located on the notice board in the hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A certificate was available to evidence that the service was insured for 22 children. The expiry date was recorded as 27 November 2025.