

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016GY015
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Name of Service:	Pixie Hollow Montessori & Afterschool
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Address of Service:	Northgate Street, Athenry, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H65 K832
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Hannon
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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

Pixie Hollow Montessori and Afterschool has been in operation since 2016 and is registered to provide a sessional early years care and education service to children aged from 2 – 6 years, Monday to Friday, for 38 weeks of the year. Opening hours are from 09:00 to 12:00 and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme is facilitated within these sessional hours.

The service is in the town of Athenry in Co Galway. It operates from the ground floor of a repurposed building. There are 2 care rooms: Room 1 in use for the sessional children and the second room is in use for school age children, as the service operates a breakfast and afterschool service. There are adult and children’s sanitary facilities, a kitchen and office. The service has access to an outdoor play area which is located within a short distance of the premises at the rear of the building.

Staffing

There were 5 adults working in the service 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 wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a designated person available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The staff roster indicated that either the person in charge or the designated person were available while the pre-school children were on the premises.
 - (c) A management structure was available in the reception area with photographs and qualifications of each adult working directly with children. In conversation, the adults were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) The recruitment files of all five adults were reviewed:
- (a) Seven of the 10 validated references were from previous employers.
 - (b) The remaining 3 of 10 validated references were from sources other than previous employers.

- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all 5 adults demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Overseas police vetting was available for one adult for whom it was required who had lived outside of Ireland for more than 6 months as an adult.
- (4) Staff files viewed on the day indicated that all 5 adults working directly with the children had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above, 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.*
- (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 there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children during the sessional hours of the service.
- (3) The adult/child ratio was met. There were 3 adults observed working directly with 22 children when the inspector arrived at the service. A fourth adult, rostered on, arrived at 10:00 and the registered provider was available to assist with the administrative requirements of the inspection and was observed working directly with the children as required.

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;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (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.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, designated person charge and the three adults working directly with the children were available in the staff recruitments files.
 - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide was available from the parent handbook.
 - (c)-(f) Adult/child ratios, type of care programme, facilities, opening hours and fees were available in the parent handbook.
 - (g) The policies, procedures and statements required under Regulation 10 were in the service’s policies and procedures folder available in the office.

- (h) Details of attendance by each early years child was recorded on an application on the tablet.
- (i) Staff sign in/sign out times were recorded and furnished to the inspector, these were in addition to the staff roster which recorded the daily working hours of each adult in the service.
- (j) Four administration of medication records, from January 2025 until June 2025 when the sessional service closed for the Summer, were available on a digital application which on review were noted to contain the required information.
- (k) Nine accident/incident/injury records were available from January to June 2025, these were noted to contain the required information.
- (3) The records in paragraph 1 in relation to the pre-school service were open to inspection in the service.

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:

- Children's snacks, served at 10:15 were observed to be healthy and nutritious. In conversation, the adults stated that the sessional children's snacks were mainly prepared by the parents/guardians and these were noted to consist of yogurt, cheese, mixed fruits and vegetables. Those children who were availing of further care in the afternoon, from a sister service nearby, were offered a snack which had been prepared in the service kitchen consisting of bite sized pieces of fruit and wheat crackers. Water and milk were offered to all the children with water jugs and cups available throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor areas.
- Children who were hungry and requested more food at snack time were observed to be accommodated.
- The inspector observed that children were afforded ample time to finish snack without being rushed. An example included 4 children still eating at 10:45 while those who had finished were engaged in activities.
- Developmentally appropriate cutlery and crockery were in use and positioned within easy access of the children.

- Children were observed accessing the sanitary area independently. Staff were available nearby to provide reminders of hygienic hand washing and to facilitate and model the disposal of paper towel into the pedal bin in the area.

Supporting children's relationships:

- A key person approach was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for maintaining relationships with a designated group of children and their parents/guardians.
- Children's scrapbooks were labelled with each child's name, which had been put together by staff, were available for the inspector to view. Staff stated they document each child's individual interests and emergent curriculum throughout their time in the service.
- Staff members in the care room who were supervising children playing in both the indoor and outdoor areas, were observed to work well as a team. They were heard, on several occasions, discussing children's individual needs frequently throughout the day.
- Reminders were given verbally and visually by staff during the morning routines so the children could anticipate and prepare themselves for transitions. Examples included a timer in use with a bell and staff informing the children verbally of the countdown to tidy up time when completing activities.
- The adults in the care room were observed acting on children's non-verbal cues and providing a flexible routine to respond to individual children's needs. Examples included a staff member asking a child who had a sad face at the snack table would they like more food which was positively responded too. In addition, an adult was heard adapting story time to include singing action songs "let's go swimming" and "shake your sillies" in which children were able to expend energy.
- Opportunities were available for children to pour and serve themselves, using a variety of containers and utensils. Adults were nearby to help if required.
- Children were provided with the opportunity to learn respect for living things and social responsibility. An example included two fish in a tank in the care room which staff stated were fed by the children while under supervision from the adults.
- During tabletop activities the adults were heard engaging positively with the children. Examples included adults heard praising and encouraging children to persevere with completing puzzles.

Physical and material environment:

- The 2 care rooms appeared clean and well organised.
- Clearly defined areas were visible which provided play opportunities for enhancing the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- Toys and play equipment, which were easily accessible from storage boxes, were displayed and labelled with pictures and words.
- Tables and chairs were positioned to facilitate group and solitary activities with a wide variety of resources stationed nearby.
- Displays including children’s artwork and a birthday wall were visually appealing and included relevant titles and captions including “My first day at Pre-school” and “Happy Birthday”.
- The fully enclosed outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was observed in use by the children on the morning of inspection. Opportunities were provided for challenge and safe risk with apex climbing walls visible. Tricycles and balance bikes provided opportunities to practice gross motor skills of pedalling, coordination, balancing and core strength. In addition, imaginary play opportunities were available from the mud kitchen in which children were observed in open ended play, teamwork and mathematical skills of pouring and measuring. A covered area was available ensuring the children could play outdoors in all weathers.

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 entrance door, in the reception area, was fitted with a keypad preventing unauthorised adults from entering the service. In addition, the reception area was fitted with glass panels enabling staff to see who was on the other side before providing access, thus ensuring the safety of the children. The inside of the door was fitted with an electronic switch on the inside placed above adult height preventing unsupervised children from leaving the area.

- All toys and play equipment in the indoor and outdoor play areas were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children attending the service. They were noted to be in good condition and well maintained.
- Cleaning agents were stored on high shelving in the care room and in a secure locked area outdoors.
- The perimeter of the outdoor play area was secured with high stone walls, high wooden fencing, green metal fencing and a wooden gate with a sliding bolt. Safety tiles were visible on the ground surface under physical play equipment helping to reduce the impact of falls.

Infection Control:

- Intentionally planned activities were observed on instructing children in techniques to limit the spread of infection. An example was an adult reading a story in which they demonstrated, as part of the story line, how to sneeze without spreading germs, which was copied by the children listening to the story "Atchoo".
- Perishable food was observed to be stored in the fridge in the kitchen preventing it from spoiling.
- Sinks in use by the adults and children were fitted with thermostatically controlled hot water, 31.2°C, paper roll from a centre feed dispenser, dispensing soap and pedal operated bins for the disposal of paper waste.
- Children's personal belongings including bags and coats were stored on hooks away from the floor area.
- Three windows in the care room were open providing a flow of fresh air.
- Cleaning checklists were available and were noted to be completed and up to date.

Administration of Medication:

- The inspector did not observe any medication being administered while on inspection.
- Temperature reducing medication was available and was stored in a cupboard in the kitchen out of reach of the children. These individual bottles were stored in their original containers and were noted to be in date.

Safe Sleep:

- Rest areas, which were located away from noisy activities, were fitted with soft furnishings including vinyl sofas and cushions.

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) Documentary evidence in the form of the staff roster and First Aid Responder certificates (FAR) were available which indicated that 2 staff members were trained as First Aid Responders (FAR); both of whom were available while the pre-school children were on the premises. In addition, three staff members had training in basic first aid.
- (2)
- (a) The well stocked first aid box was stored within easy reach of the adults in the office on a high shelf.
 - (b) The first aid box was available at all times while the pre-school children were present in the 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.*
- (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) Monthly fire drills were furnished to the inspector. The last date recorded was noted as 06 August 2025 with the previous monthly drills recorded on 04 July 2025 and 27 June 2025.
 - (b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The recorded dates were noted as 01 November 2024 and 01 August 2025, respectively.

- (2)
- (c) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were available on the premises for review by the inspector.
- (4) The fire procedure notices were visible on the walls of the service ensuring that the adults were aware of the steps to be followed in the event of an emergency to ensure the safety of the children and adults on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was insured. Written records were furnished to the inspector which included the following details:

- The name, address and contact details of the insurance company
- The name and address of the service
- The number of children for whom the service is insured: 28
- The type of service: Part-time and school age care

Expiry date: 27 March 2026.