

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016KE002			
Name of Service:	Punchestown Montessori School			
Address of Service:	Baltreacy, Punchestown, Naas, Co. Kildare			
Eircode:	W91 FV00			
Name of Registered Provider:	Gaye Mullen			
Service type:	Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	04/02/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child & Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Ballymore Eustace Road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher
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

Punchestown Montessori School is a private sessional service which caters to children aged between two and six years old. The service opens Monday to Friday between 09:00am - 12:00pm for 38 weeks of the pre-school year. The service is also registered to provide an afternoon session from 13:00pm-16:00pm but has not operated this session for 2025/2026. The service is located in a single storey building adjacent to the private home of the registered provider in a rural setting. Three pre-school rooms are provided. The play areas located to the side and rear of the premises, including a covered garden room.

Staffing

There were five adults employed and present in the service on the day of inspection. All adults, including the registered provider were working directly with the children.

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, 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*

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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; a named person is available to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The records of five staff members, including the registered provider were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and verified past employer references or verified references from a reputable source other than a past employer were available in respect of each adult employed in the service whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for three adults.

(d) Police vetting was available for one adult who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4)

All adults employed and working directly with the children held a qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Qualifications Framework, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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)
There were 38 children attending the service being supervised directly by 5 staff members during the morning.
- (3)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the inspection as specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6.

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) Children were observed happy, content and relaxed within the pre-school environment. Staff members ensured children in their care were supported in all aspects of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and demonstrated warmth and affection in all interactions with the children. Staff were very respectful towards the children in their care and positive body language and gentle voice tones were used. Children were supervised and assisted with hand washing as necessary which was observed taking place prior to the children eating snack and following toilet use.
- The children were appropriately dressed in coats, hats and wellies when playing in the outdoors as it was a damp morning.

There was an emphasis on positive behaviour and this was observed to be managed in a calm consistent manner. Children were encouraged to share and be kind to each other and were immediately acknowledged on an individual basis or as a group and were praised for a job(s) well done.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The pre-school rooms were designed to facilitate a child led environment and displayed equipment and materials which were accessible to the pre-school children on low level open shelving units. Low level tables and chairs were available to ensure children could sit comfortably for snack and any tabletop activities they chose to engage in.

Materials and equipment used included, Montessori equipment, natural materials, wooden pegboards, threading, puzzles, loose parts, jigsaws blocks, animals, paint, paper, crayons, art and craft materials and equipment for cutting sticking and gluing.

Interest areas incorporated into the pre-school rooms included practical life, language development, numeracy, culture, science and arts and crafts.

The outdoor play area had a wooden climbing frame, a swing set, areas to run, play games and hide, sand and water play, a mud kitchen and associated utensils.

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

A healthy eating policy was in place and the service provided the morning snack which varied throughout the week and included, fresh fruit, crackers, cheese, bread, butter and jam. Children helped themselves to the snacks and ate at a time of their choosing. Fresh tap water was freely available which the children self-served as required in each room.

Parents could also provide snacks for their child and the staff advised they were observant of any foods that may present a risk of choking, for example full grapes which were immediately cut into quarters.

In conversation with staff they advised they incorporated conversations around healthy eating and food choices at the beginning of term with the children and included chats about dental and general hygiene.

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 gate to the service was electronically secure and controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises. The entrance doors were also secure.

During conversations with staff members, they advised they immediately remove any necklace a child may wear into the service.

No hazards were observed in the indoor or outdoor environments as the service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents which were out of reach of the children.

Fire exits were unobstructed and staff advised they were familiar with the emergency evacuation routes taken from their room. The location of the assembly point in the outdoor area was conspicuously displayed.

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)
Persons were trained First Aid Response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)
The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the service.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending 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.
- (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 was available of fire drills which were completed monthly in the service, the last recorded fire drill took place 12 January 2026.

(b)

A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises and were last serviced March 2025 and 21 January 2026 respectively.

(4)

Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

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 valid until 27 November 2026. The insurance provided cover for 42 children.