

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| 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: | 19/03/2024 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 37 | 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

N/A

Description of service

Punchestown Montessori School is a private sessional service which provides care and education to preschool 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 2023/2024. The service is located adjacent to the private home of the registered provider in a rural setting. Three pre-school rooms and several play areas located at the side and rear of the premises, including a covered garden room are provided.

Staffing

Five adults, including the registered provider are employed in the service and were present and working directly with the children on the day of 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 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, 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)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The records of five staff members employed, 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 of the five adults whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for five employed staff members.

(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.

(4)

Five 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.

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 37 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 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-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)-(i)

Ten child records were assessed and contained the relevant written details outlined in (a)-(i) of the regulation.

(3)(c)

All child records were available for inspection.

(4)

The registered provider confirmed the records are retained for the required period of time in the service.

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 secure and controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school service. A staff member documented the inspectors' visit to the service in the visitor's book on arrival.

Staff members advised the inspector they immediately cut/halved any food items observed provided in lunch boxes that had the potential to cause a choking risk to a child.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

The premises was observed maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Handwashing routines had been well established and children were observed washing their hands before sitting to eat their morning snack and following toilet use. Thermostatically controlled hot water, paper hand towel, dispensed hygienically from wall mounted dispensers and liquid soap were available for hygienic hand washing practices. Foot pedal operated bins were in place for the hygienic disposal of used paper towel, tissues and any waste.

Administration of Medication:

Staff members advised they had not administered medication while working in the service but outlined to the inspector the procedure that would be followed in the event medication was required to be administered.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

Outings do not take place from the service; this was confirmed by the staff members.

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.
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.
- (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 registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each pre-school room.
- (2)
Not applicable as this is not a drop in service.
- (3) (a),(b)
The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.
- (4)
The registered provider confirmed the visitor book was retained for the required period of time.

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)
Staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and paediatric first aid 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 Yellow room.
- (b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to 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 record in writing was kept of all fire drills that took place in the premises. The last recorded fire drill was dated 29 February 2024.

(b) There were records available detailing the maintenance of the firefighting equipment and fire/smoke detection system in the service dated 15 February 2024 and 19 March 2024.

(4)

Notices were displayed detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The children were observed to be supervised at all times both indoors and outdoors by the staff members caring for them during the inspection.

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 2024. The insurance provided cover for 44 children.