

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016LK011
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Name of Service:	Granagh Pebbles Montessori and Afterschool
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Address of Service:	Knockfierna, Granagh, Ballingarry, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 Y3YR
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Name of Registered Provider:	Natalie Stapleton
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	14/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Offices, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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

Granagh Pebbles Montessori is a private Montessori pre-school located in a rural setting in Co. Limerick. The service operates Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 12:00 midday. A service for school aged children is provided each afternoon. The school can accommodate a maximum of 22 preschool children at any one time. It operates from 2 purposely designed rooms adjacent to the registered provider's home.

A large outdoor play facility is located to the rear of the premises where children can spend long periods of time each day.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and manager of the service. There are 2 additional staff employed to work at the school. All staff have the appropriate qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education. Staff engage regularly in ongoing training and continuous professional development.

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, 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,*

(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 on the day of the inspection and there was a named person who could deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a) There were written references, from past employers, available in respect of each staff working in the service. All references were validated as required.

(b) References from reputable sources were not required as all staff references were from previous employers.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were available in respect of each staff working at the service. All certificates were dated within the last three years.

(d) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction.

(4) All staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) The service operates a morning session from 9.00am to 12.00md. On the day of the inspection there were 20 pre-school children present with 3 staff members. The adult child ratio was compliant with the requirements of Regulation 11.

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 preschool session begins each morning at 9:00 am and concludes at 12 midday. All children wear a school uniform of navy tracksuit. There was a healthy eating policy in place at the service and all parents provided the children with a healthy snack each day. The lunches observed on the day consisted of fruit pieces, sandwiches, wraps and yogurts. All perishable foods were stored in a refrigerator. All lunches were plated at break time. Staff were observed sitting chatting with the children while eating. This helped create a calm sociable atmosphere at break time. Drinking water was supplied by the service and children were reminded and prompted during the day to take regular drinks.

Children had unrestricted access to the toilets, located next to the pre-school rooms. A nappy changing facility was available if required. Hot water, paper hand towels and liquid soap were accessible to ensure hygienic washing of hands. Foot pedal operated, lidded bins were available to ensure the safe disposal of all waste.

A change of clothes was available for all children if required. Appropriate outdoor rain gear and wellingtons were available to facilitate children playing outside in all weather conditions.

A rest area with comfortable furniture, cushions and soft floor mats created a quiet, cosy area for children if tired.

The atmosphere in the service was calm and quiet with children engaged in many various types of play activities.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The school operated from a purposely designed extension located at the rear of the registered provider's home. There were 2 adjoining rooms. One room had lots of low-level tables and chairs accommodating tabletop activities and dining at lunch time. The second space was designed for free play opportunities and for imaginative play experiences. All toys and play materials were displayed on low level open shelves, making them easily accessible to the children. On arrival each morning to the preschool children signed themselves in, by placing their picture on the sign in board. Weekly curriculum plans were communicated to the parents at the start of each week.

A family wall displayed photographs of each child's family. Children's artwork was exhibited across both rooms of the premises.

The outdoor play facility at the rear of the premises afforded lots of space for outdoor activities. A large cement yard provided a safe area for the use of ride on toys, tricycles, tractors, scooters and bubble cars. A grassed area located under palm trees provided a space for children to plant, dig and enjoy messy play opportunities outdoors. Mud kitchens and pots and pans facilitated lots of imaginative play. A large, sheltered area outside was provided to accommodate play outdoors in all weather conditions. In this safe area children were observed playing at a large sand pit and participating in art and craft activities. Children were closely supervised while playing outside.

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:

Daily risk assessments were carried out in all areas of the service both indoors, outdoors and in sanitary accommodation to ensure that there were no hazards which could cause potential risk of harm to children each day at the service. The door to the service was secured and access to the building was permitted by the staff. All emergency exits were unobstructed. All toys and play equipment both internally and externally were safe for the age group using them, were in good condition, were free from pinch and crush points, exposed bolts or any sharp edges. All storage facilities were inaccessible to children. The outdoor space was safe and secure with high walls and fences surrounding the entire area. This prevented any unsupervised access to the area or from the area during the operational hours of the school.

Infection Control:

Hot water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were available to ensure hygienic washing of hands. All children washed their hands following outdoor play activities and prior to dining at break time. Lidded bins were provided to ensure the safe storage of all waste. Wipes and tissues were accessible to the children at all times in the school

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) The registered provider and a second staff member had an up-to-date certificate in first aid. A refresher first aid course was scheduled to be completed by staff in November 2024.

(2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was stored within easy reach of the staff in the preschool room.

(b) The first aid box was available for use at all times.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Monthly fire drills took place at the service with the most recent fire drill having taken place on the 1st of October 2024.

(b) All firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on the 19th of September 2024.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The entrance door was locked and all who entered the building were checked in by a member of staff. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets and wash hand basins available in the service.