

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016LS001			
Name of Service:	Early Learning Montessori			
Address of Service:	Church Avenue, Church Avenue, Stradbally, Co. Laois			
Eircode:	R32 X6T7			
Name of Registered Provider:	Sheila Conroy			
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	05/02/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	46	PM	20
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.			
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy			
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.			

Description of service

The service is registered as a part time service to accommodate fifty-four children from two to six years of age. The service operates morning and afternoon sessions on a Monday to Friday basis for children participating in the ECCE programme and a part time service. The service is operated by an independent provider. The Early Years' Service is located on the ground and first floors of an adapted community facility. Three pre-school rooms and an office/ kitchenette are provided. An outdoor play area is attached to the front of the service. Onsite parking and set down facilities are provided. The service is located in the village of Stradbally, County Laois.

Staffing

The registered provider employs nine adults to work in the service. The designated person in charge and eight adults were working directly with the children on the 05 February 2026. The registered provider was not present for the inspection or the closing meeting.

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.

Regulation 8- Notification of change in circumstances

Regulation 9- Management and recruitment - (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) (4)

Regulation 11 -Staffing levels - (1) (4) (8)(a)

Regulation 16- Record of a pre-school service – (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j)(k)

Regulation 19- Health, welfare and development of child - (1)(a)

Regulation 20 – Facilities for Rest and Play -- (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)

Regulation 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 24- Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance (3)(4)

Regulation 25- First aid - (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 26 -Fire safety measures - (1)(a)(b) (4)

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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.

Additional Information

A referral was submitted to TUSLA services operating outside of registration department (SOORS) on 6 February 2026 and accepted by the SOORS department on 11 February 2026.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Compliance Information

(1)
The service submitted a change in circumstances in respect of a change relating to the number of children to be accommodated in the service from 36 to 54. This change was approved by the TUSLA registration office from 28 April 2025.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

- The service was found to be operating outside of its registered capacity for pre-school room 3 as an additional four children were in attendance. On 5 February 2026 twenty-two children were present in pre-school room 3. On 28 April 2025, following a fit for purpose inspection the service was registered with Tusla to accommodate a maximum of eighteen children in pre-school room 3.

This non-compliance was previously noted on the last inspection of 15 June 2023.

The service was referred to the TUSLA registration department who at the time wrote to the registered provider informing them that operating outside of the registration status for the service was a breach of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and instructed the service to immediately revert back to their approved number of children as stated in the National Register. The registered

provider confirmed in writing that they had immediately returned to operating within their approved numbers and this action was accepted in good faith by the TUSLA registration department.

2. Three children were observed to be attending the service in excess of five hours between 09:00 and 15:30 availing of full day care provision in excess of the hours permitted for the service by the TUSLA registration department. The service is registered with TUSLA for part time provision only.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)
The registered provider stated in the response that the staff were reminded that the maximum capacity for each room in the service is 18. Staff were reminded that staff and children must remain in their respective rooms to ensure that the maximum capacity is adhered to. Management will monitor this situation and remind staff of maximum capacity and the importance of allocated rooms for same. (Communications from Tusla SOORS department submitted).

(2)
The registered provider stated in the response that the service was now adhering to its registration status. (Communications from Tusla SOORS department submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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)

A designated person in charge was available in the service on the arrival of the inspector.

(b)

A designated person in charge who was rostered until 13:30 remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

Ten files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available in respect of nine files reviewed from past employers or from a source other than a past employer.

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider from a past employer and from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the ten files reviewed.

In respect of nine of the ten files reviewed the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in respect of one of the ten files reviewed. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Staff working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

There was no designated person in charge or deputy appointed for duty between the hours of 13:30 and 15:30. The registered provider was not present in the service and the person in charge who facilitated the inspection was due to take up duty in the premises which provided a school age service at 13:30. It is acknowledged that the designated person in charge arranged additional cover in the school age service to remain on site to facilitate the closing meeting.

(2)(d)

Police vetting was not available in respect of one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b)

The registered provider stated in the response that a person in charge and two deputies have been appointed and the rota has been amended to ensure that a person in charge is always onsite during the daily opening hours of the service. (Roster submitted).

(2)(d)

The registered provider stated in the response that police vetting has been applied for in respect of one staff member and that induction checklists for staff files now include police vetting requirements where a person has lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months. (Police Vetting application and induction checklist submitted).

Summary Comment

(1)(b)

In respect of the corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

(2)(d)

The non-compliance remains outstanding until the registered provider submits the required police vetting.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(4)

There were forty-six children attending the service in the morning supervised by nine adults including a person in charge. There were twenty children attending the service in the afternoon supervised by five adults.

(8)(a)

Staff attendance records reviewed indicated that at least two adults are present throughout the opening hours of the service.

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;*
- (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.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(j) and (k).

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(h)

In pre-school room 3 the attendance of the twenty-two children present in the morning was not recorded in the child attendance record book.

(i)

A staff roster was not available in the service for review.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(h)

The registered provider stated in the response that the attendance of children is recorded on a separate roll book in the children's base classroom. (Attendance submitted).

(1)(i)

The registered provider stated in the response that a staff roster is now on display in a communal area of service and the staff roster is sent to staff on a weekly basis. (Roster submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development. Children used the toilet independently and hand washing was supervised by a staff member.

Adults were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. The children were encouraged to be independent and their choices were supported. Staff were observed to offer praise to each child for their involvement in activities.

Children were observed to enjoy free play, choosing their own activity to participate in and playing in the outdoor play area supervised by staff.

A range of developmentally appropriate experiences and materials were available for all children both indoors and outdoors. In the pre-school rooms low level tables and chairs were in place. Low-level shelving with equipment and materials were accessible to the children. Artwork and seasonally themed decorations were noted.

Play equipment and materials were accessible to children and individual preferences were accommodated as to what and how long children wished to engage with specific activities. Materials included paint, modelling dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals, and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws, and shape sorters. A verbal handover was observed to parents at collection time. A social media platform is used to send weekly updates and photographs depicting the children’s activities and events taking place in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016 shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Suitable and adequate play and work equipment were provided indoors and outdoors which incorporated areas with toys and equipment for arts and crafts, home corners, interest areas and tabletop activities.

(b)

Soft furnishings provided suitable and adequate rest facilities in the three pre-school rooms.

(2)(a)

A large garden area was located to the front of the service and available to the children. The perimeter was secured. A sheltered play area with an all-weather absorbent surface was located in the outdoor area. The garden was equipped with a variety of balance beams, slides, rockers, tables and benches, seesaws and a stationary

wooden train and boat for imaginative play. wall mounted chalk boards, a music wall, a water wall and a variety of bikes and trikes were available for use by children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

Low-level beds or sleep mats were not readily available in the service for any child attending on a part time basis who required rest or sleep.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b)

The registered provider stated in the response that low level beds are now available for children attending on a part time basis who require rest or sleep. (Photograph submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken photographic evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

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

Infection Control:

Supplies of paper hand towel and liquid soap were available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation was recorded at 30°C. The sanitary accommodation and nappy changing areas were ventilated by mechanical ventilation.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was clearly labelled and stored out of the reach of children in the office/kitchenette area.

Outing:

Checklists and risk assessments were in place in respect of outings conducted from the service to the local area and the annual school tour.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was an absence of documented training and demonstrated competency in medical tasks undertaken by staff members including the provision of nutritional support and blood glucose monitoring for a child with a defined medical condition which posed a potential risk of harm to the child.
2. The door to the office/ kitchenette remained open and accessible throughout the inspection. A child returning to pre-school room 2 entered the office/kitchenette unnoticed by staff on return from the outdoor area which posed a potential risk of harm should the child gain access to the hazards within.
3. A screw was observed protruding from a sliding door of the children's sanitary accommodation adjacent to pre-school room 3 which posed a potential risk of injury to a pre-school child.
4. A screw was observed protruding from the skirting board behind the door of the sanitary accommodation located in the entrance hallway which posed a potential risk of injury to a pre-school child.
5. The most recent Garda vetting disclosure presented in respect of one of the staff members was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Infection Control:

1. Perishable food products including snacks and meals for children availing of part time provision were not stored appropriately in a refrigerator.

The main meal provision for a child and their specific supplementary food products was observed to be stored in the child's school bag with an ice pack.

This posed a potential risk of foodborne illness to the children as perishable food items were not stored in a refrigerator with a temperature below 5 degrees Celsius.
2. Food products including an open container of cocoa flavoured instant beverage, vegetable oil and cornflour were stored in the sanitary accommodation adjacent to pre-school room 3 which posed a potential infection control risk.

Fire Safety:

1. Evidence was not available to indicate that monthly fire drills were being carried out in the premises. In all three pre-school rooms fire drills were not recorded as taking place monthly in December 2025 and January 2026. A lack of consistent fire drill practice may impede the safe

evacuation of children from each of the three pre-school rooms in the event of a fire in the premises.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider stated in the response that:

General Safety:

1. Certificates of training for four staff members have been obtained for the provision of nutritional support. Certified training will be provided in respect of any additional staff members undertaking the provision of nutritional support. (Certificates submitted).
2. Staff were reminded that the door to the kitchenette/office must remain closed at all times to ensure general safety. (Staff meeting - 6 February 2026 submitted).
3. The screw was removed from the sliding door in room 3. Staff have been asked to report general safety concerns immediately. (Photograph and staff meeting - 6 February 2026 submitted).
4. The screw was removed from the door frame in the sanitary accommodation. Staff have been asked to report general safety concerns immediately. (Photograph and staff meeting - 6 February 2026 submitted).
5. Garda Vetting has been requested for the staff member. Regular checks on staff files will be implemented to ensure all documents are in date. (Garda Vetting application submitted).

Infection Control:

1. Food is now stored in fridges. Staff were reminded of and furnished with the food safety policy for the service. Food is now stored in correct conditions and no longer stored in school bags (Photographs, food safety policy and staff meeting - 6 February 2026 submitted).
2. Staff were reminded of food safety and the correct storage of food. (Staff meeting - 6 February 2026 submitted).

Fire Safety:

1. The staff were reminded of the importance of recording all fire drills in the allocated record books (Fire evacuation drill records for February 2026 for all 3 rooms and staff meeting - 6 February 2026 submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement apart from General Safety – 5.

General Safety – 5.

The non – compliance remains outstanding until the registered provider submits the required garda vetting.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(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

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) must be approved by a staff member.

(b)

A visitor log was in place to record the details and purpose of all visitors to the service.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

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 one other staff member were qualified in First Aid Response (FAR).

One staff member qualified in First Aid Response (FAR) was available on the premises during the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

First aid boxes and cabinets were identifiable and readily available on the ground and first floor in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible to the adults caring for the children in the pre-school 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 firefighting 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)

Written records for completed fire drills were available on the premises. The last fire drills for the three pre-school rooms were recorded as taking place on 08 January 2026 and 09 and 18 December 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment in the premises were serviced in February 2025. The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in November 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in conspicuous positions throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Non-Compliance Information

Neither of the two cover notes presented and detailing the level of insurance cover provided for children indicated that sufficient and appropriate insurance was in place for the type of service provision and the number of children present or that could be enrolled in the service.

Cover note one indicated cover for 54 children but for sessional provision only which was inadequate.

Cover note two indicated full day care cover but for 36 children only which was inadequate.

It is acknowledged that the registered provider took an immediate corrective action and evidence of current insurance cover for 54 children attending the part time and sessional service with an expiry date of 27 March 2026 was submitted post inspection on 06 February 2026 to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated in the response that the insurance documentation was immediately amended to reflect cover for the service type and number of children that can be in attendance. (Insurance certificate submitted).

Summary Comment

In respect of the corrective actions taken documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate, reviewed by the Early Years Inspector and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.