

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016MO001
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Name of Service:	Meelickmore Montessori
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Address of Service:	Meelickmore National School, Meelickmore, Claremorris, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F12 EK20
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Name of Registered Provider:	Ciara McKermitt
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency 2nd Floor, St Mary's HQ Castlebar Co Mayo
Inspection undertaken by:	B Lavin
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

This preschool service is in operation since 2016. The service operates from a part of the primary school. The premises is a single storey building. The playroom has direct access to their own outdoor area. The service is registered to cater for children aged 2-6 years from 09:15 to 12:15 on a sessional basis. In addition to the preschool service there is an afterschool service provided.

Staffing

Two adults work in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children. An additional staff member is available as a relief staff.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

9 Management and Recruitment

11 Staffing Levels

15 Record of a Preschool Child

19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child

23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

25 First Aid

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Preschool Child.

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

(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 is the designated person in charge in the service and a named person is available to deputise as required.
- (b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) The following vetting documentation was available for the three staff employed in the service:
 - (a) Two written validated references and two written references out of the required six references were available from past employers for two adults employed in the service.
 - (b) Two written validated references were available from a reputable source for the remaining one adult employed in the service.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for the three adults in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for the three adults.

(d) International police vetting documents were not required.

(4)
Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from Level 5 to Level 8 was available on file for the three staff who worked directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

Two validated references were not available in respect of one staff member working in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has validated the two references available for the staff member. Validation of references will be recorded for all staff members as part of the recruitment process.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence was submitted to the office of the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection.

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) During the period of inspection there were adequate numbers of adults working with the pre-school children attending the service.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained. There were 10 children present on a sessional basis aged from 2 years 9 months to 4 years old with two staff members caring for the children.

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,

(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and

(c) an authorised person.

(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) to (i)

The inspector reviewed a random sample of 10 children's records. The records contained the required details as laid out under the Regulation.

(3) (c)

The required information was made readily available for inspection in the service by the registered provider on request.

(4)

The registered provider confirmed that the records are retained for the required period of two years.

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

- During the inspection the children ate a snack which consisted of fruit, yogurt, crackers, ham, sandwiches and cheese provided from their parents or guardian. The children were seated at low tables and chairs and supervised by the staff who gave assistance where it was needed. The staff encouraged conversation with the children during mealtime.

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks without being rushed. The atmosphere during snack time was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement in the preschool room and outdoor area. They were able to explore several different interest areas while outdoors.
- In the playroom, the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of a child size couch in a designated cosy area.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence, and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.

Supporting relationships

- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.
- The staff were actively involved in children's play, where appropriate initiating games and joining in when invited to by children.
- The staff behaved in a way that created a positive atmosphere, having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection.
- The staff listened to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures and body language.
- Soft tones were used with the children, along with the child's individual name, getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- Warmth and care were shown to a child who needed their clothes changed. The staff gave the child choice and autonomy over the changing experience.
- Staff communicated with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life and any other concerns at drop off and collection times, by phone and by text.

Physical and material environment

The environment supported each child's learning, development, and wellbeing as -

- The playroom was equipped with open shelving units where children could access play equipment and materials independently. There was a variety of play equipment and materials appropriate to the children's age and stage of development.
- The playroom had various interest areas- farm, house, art, train, shop, reading, sensory, Montessori, tuff tray, wooden toys and dress up. The various interest areas supported learning across all areas of development- fine motor skills, language development, cognitive development, sensory and imaginative development.
- There was plenty of clear floor space to enable the children to move around unhindered and appropriate furnishings of low-level tables and chairs were available to facilitate mealtimes and table-top activities.
- The walls of the playroom were decorated with posters, family photos, children's artwork, learning materials in picture style and the daily routine for the children while in the service.
- There was an outdoor play area which catered for different interests at the same time. The outdoor play area had an all-weather ground and a covered roof area to allow all weather play. Outdoor play equipment included an outdoor kitchen and tuff table with lego for sensory and imaginative play, a playhouse for imaginative play, ride on toys and balance beam for gross motor play, a climbing frame for gross motor play and chalk board for interactive and creative play.

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:

- Documented and recorded daily records of attendance were observed to be kept for all of children attending the service.
- The fire doors in the building were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Foot operated pedal bins were available throughout the service and observed to be used appropriately by the children and adults when disposing of items such as paper towel following hand washing.

- Hand hygiene was observed to be practiced frequently by the adults and the children for example after outdoor play, toileting and before snack time.
- The preschool room and sanitary areas were clean and well maintained.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded pedal operated bins. Child friendly handwashing posters were located above the wash hand basins as prompters to promote good handwashing practices.

Administration of Medication:

Medications were not administered in the service on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The entrance door was not secured on arrival to the service. This poses a safety risk to both the children leaving the building and unauthorised entry of a person.
2. The outdoor area gate was not secured. This poses a safety risk to children exiting the outdoor play area.
3. A door to the primary school building was not secured as the children from the primary school use the preschool entrance hallway to store their coats.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The entrance door magnetic securing device was activated immediately on identification to the registered provider by the inspector. Daily checks of the entrance door security system will take place within the service.
2. The outdoor gate is now repaired and secure. Daily checks of the outdoor gate will take place within the service.
3. The entrance hallway will no longer be used by the primary school children to store coats. The door to the school building has been secured. Daily checks of the school door will take place within the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic and documentary evidence of the repaired outdoor gate, the entrance hall and the daily risk assessment checks were submitted to the office of the Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliances found on inspection.

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 ensured that a person trained in first aid is immediately available to the preschool children attending the service.

There was one adult employed in the service trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) with an expiry date of June 2026.

(2)(a) (b) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available and it was stored safely on a high shelf in the playroom. The first aid box had adequate supplies for the number of children attending.