

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2016TY006 | | |
| Name of Service: | The Den Montessori | | |
| Address of Service: | Ardmayle East, Boherlahan, Cashel, Co. Tipperary | | |
| Eircode: | E25 XT10 | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Kate Molony | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 29/02/2024 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 18 | PM 13 |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Tusla Child and Family Agency, Glenmorgan Building, Ferryhouse, Clonmel, Tipperary. | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | E Cullen | | |
| 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

This sessional service is located in a rural setting in the village of Boherlahan, near Cashel in South Tipperary. A service is provided to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service is open from Monday to Friday with 2 sessions offered daily for 38 weeks of the year. A registered school age service is also provided. The premises is a detached, single storey building that was converted from use as a factory for the childcare service. The premises consists of a main room, kitchen, sanitary accommodation area and a large activity room that also functions as a sheltered outdoor play space when the roller door is open.

This is a sister service to The Den Montessori, Fort Aengus and The Den Montessori, Kilfeacle.

Staffing

The service currently employs six staff members who work directly with children. The registered provider does not work directly with children in the service, however, is available for relief cover as required. Staff members held qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care at Level 5, 6, 7 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 10 – Policies, procedures and statements of a preschool service and 15 – Record of a pre-school child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included time in the indoor and outdoor areas.

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 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

(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

(2) Documentation was reviewed for the six staff members employed by the service.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available for each staff member from either a past employer, or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period over 6 months.

(4) Certificates of qualification were available on file demonstrating that staff members held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

There were written policies, procedures and statements, as specified in Schedule 5, available for the service. The policies reviewed for this inspection were the following: statement of purpose and function, policy on infection control, policy on healthy eating, policy on accidents and incidents and the policy on managing behaviour in the service. These policies and procedures were appropriate and specific to the setting.

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) On the day of inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children.

(3) The staff to child ratios were maintained as follows:

- There were 18 children aged 2 to 6 years being cared for by 2 staff during the morning session.
- There were 13 children aged 2 to 6 years being cared for by 2 staff during the afternoon session.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) – (i) Prior to a child commencing in the service, all parents and guardians were issued with a child registration form. This registration form was developed by the service and contained all of the required information for parents and guardians to complete.

A sample of eleven child registration forms were reviewed on the day of inspection, and all were completed in full with appropriate declarations signed by parents and guardians.

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

Staff members demonstrated their familiarity with individual children in their groups, this was achieved through effective use of a key worker system. There were several examples observed during the sessions where small group time was used to build sustaining and meaningful relationships between the children and their key worker. On the day a small group craft activity and circle time were observed. The staff members sat with children in the key worker groups and engaged in conversation with and listened attentively to the children as they spoke. One group were observed discussing the daffodil buds which they were waiting to bloom. The staff member supported children in this discussion to make connections to prior learning on the life cycle of the flower. Later during outdoor play the children were excited to find a daffodil in the garden which had bloomed. Also, during outdoor play a child had found some worms on the ground, a staff member fostered the children's sense of curiosity by asking questions and facilitating a discussion with a group of children about the worm.

Strategies were in place to support children to transition from one activity to the next. For example, on arrival in the service children unpacked their snacks and chose a plate to place them upon. These were then refrigerated until snack time when a fun interactive colour game was used to support the transition from group work to snack. These transition activities supported children's arrival in the service, through providing opportunity for conversation with peers and staff members while unpacking snacks and choosing a plate colour of their preference.

The large classroom was bright, warm, and inviting, this was achieved using natural materials and neutral colours. Children's identity and belonging was fostered through the display of works of art and their recent learning which included a birthday and family wall display. A 'proud cloud' display was used to as a space where children could display their self-selected works of art in a meaningful way.

Low-level open shelving units were used to create areas of interest and display a large range of Montessori materials. Children could freely access materials and resources from the labelled shelves, promoting independence and choice making. A range of play-based materials were offered in the home corner, dress up and small world play areas of the room. Children’s literacy development was promoted with a well laid out and resourced library area. Books, comfortable seating and beanbags were available in a quieter area of the room.

Outdoors, children were observed to engage in a range of activities. Wheeled and ride on toys were available for use. A large mud kitchen equipped provided opportunity to engage in role play and messy play. The large outdoor area had a tarmacadam surface which was accessed from the classroom and a grass section which had a climbing frame and swing set.

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) There was a person trained in first aid response available to the children attending the early years service for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

(2)(a)(b) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises available for the use of the children attending the early years 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) There was a record of fire drills which had taken place in the service. The most recent fire drill was recorded as having taken place on 10 January 2024.
- (b) There was a record available demonstrating that the firefighting equipment was last serviced on 25 September 2023 and the smoke alarm system was last serviced on 19 December 2023.
- (4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed beside the emergency exit door on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service demonstrated insurance cover for a sessional with afterschool for 22 children. The documentation available stated cover for two sessions. The insurance policy commenced 28 March 2023 and will expire 27 March 2024.