

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017WH501
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Name of Service:	Na Fea Montessori Pre-School & Homework Club
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Address of Service:	Beech Park, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N37 YK24
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie McManus
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Inspection undertaken by:	Stella Murray and Lorraine O'Connor
Title:	Inspection Registration Manager and 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

Na Fea Montessori Preschool and homework club is one of two services operated by the registered provider. A sessional and part time service operates from 08:30 -13:00hrs Monday and Friday. The age range of children enrolled in the early years service is 2 to 6 years of age. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, operating from an adapted single storey premises in Athlone town. The service comprises of a well-equipped pre-school room, a small kitchenette and office. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the back of the service. A school aged childcare service operates from 14:00-17:30hrs.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service and employs 5 staff members. On the day of inspection 4 staff members including the service manager, were providing direct care to the 15 children present. The registered provider arrived shortly after the inspector's arrival remaining on the premises for the duration of the 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 areas of governance and health, welfare and development of the child. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulations;

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (3), (4), (6A), (7)(a) – Management and recruitment.

Regulation 10 - Policies and Procedures.

Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(2)(4)(8)(a) - Staffing Levels.

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Regulation 19 (4)(a)(b)(c) – Health, Welfare and development of the child.

Regulation 24 – (1),(3)(a)(b), (4), Checking in and out and record of attendance.

Regulation 27 – Supervision.

Regulation 28 – Insurance.

Regulation 32(1)(a)(b)(c), (2)(a)(b) – Complaints.

The findings are outlined within the relevant regulations contained within this report. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation (19)(4)(b)(c).

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

The inspection was triggered by information received to the inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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

(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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of "paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)" for "paragraphs (5) and (6)", and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): "

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(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The service has a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were present for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in the service. All staff were aware of their individual role and responsibilities.

Six staff files including the file for the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted;

(2)(a)(b)

There were two written references available in respect of the registered provider.

Two written validated references were available from past employers or from a source other than a past employer in respect of all staff members.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the five staff members and for the registered provider.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

Not applicable as no staff member had resided outside of the jurisdiction as an adult.

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(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any staff member being permitted to work within the service.

(4)

The registered provider and all 5 Staff members working directly with the children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education from Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6A)

One employee present was working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

(7)(a) The registered provider held details of staff induction checklists, and forms to indicate that staff members had signed to declare that they had read and understood the risk and safety statement/policies of the service. Records were available to demonstrate that regular staff meetings are conducted. Performance reviews are undertaken for staff employed at the service.

Staff held certificates to indicate that they had participated in the "Children First Mandated Person" training.

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

The following policies were reviewed and were found to be in keeping with the requirements of Regulation 10;

- Use of internet, Photographic and Recording Devices (incorporating Multimedia).
- Complaints Policy.

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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.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children attending the service. The minimum ratio of adults to children was exceeded during the inspection.

(2)
There were 17 children attending the service being supervised directly by four adults.

(4)(a)(b)
An adequate number of adults supervised children attending on a sessional and part time basis on the day of the inspection.

(8)(a)
The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times during the operation of the early years service.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a pre-school child shall not be-

- (a) permitted access to the internet,*
- (b) photographed, or*
- (c) recorded*

while attending the pre-school service other than in accordance with the terms of the consent of a parent or guardian given in the form specified in the service's policy on the use of the internet and photographic and recording devices.

Compliance Information

(4)(a) Not applicable as the service policy does not allow children access the internet. Computers are not available to the children attending.

(b)(c) It is the policy of the service that parental consent is obtained prior to a child being photographed or recorded. A random sample of 10 consent forms in line with the services policy on use of internet, photographic and recording devices were reviewed. These forms were completed in accordance to the requirements set out in the service's policy.

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.

(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.*

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(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 records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member in real time on the service's electronic application.

(3)(a)(b)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by a staff member. The inspection team were requested to sign into visitors books prior to being permitted entry into the service.

(4)

A visitor log was retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

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 being supervised by the staff members at all times in the pre-school room during the inspection; this included during play activities, snack time, bathroom use and handwashing. The layout of the pre-school room supported the supervision of the children, staff were able to observe children by sight while they played in the various well defined interest areas or took a break in the cozy zone available within the preschool room.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate was on display. There was evidence of current insurance cover for up to 22 children attending for sessional and part time care, valid until 27 March 2026.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) *A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-*
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*
- (3) *A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-*
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that;

- (1) (a) The complaints policy of the service outlined the procedure to be followed by the complainant when making a complaint in relation to the service.
- (b) The complaints policy provided details on how complaints are dealt with.
- (c) The complaints policy documents the procedures for keeping the complainant informed regarding the manner in which the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2) (a) The registered provider was aware of the requirement to keep records of any complaints made regarding the service for a 2 year period. The inspectors were advised that one complaint had been received in the past 2 years.

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(b) evidence was available to demonstrate that a complaint was being dealt with in accordance to service policy.

(3) (a)(b) A record in writing was kept regarding a complaint made and the manner in which it was dealt with, This was open to inspection by the inspectors.