

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:	06/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	7
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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:	C.O' Connor Hughes
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 Early Years' Service provides a sessional and part time service. The age range of children enrolled in the service is 2 to 6 years of age. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates from 08:30-13:00 Monday to Friday. The Early Years' Service is located in an adapted single storey premises in Athlone town and provides a pre-school room, small kitchenette and office. There are two outdoor play areas available.

Staffing

The designated person in charge and two staff members were working directly with children on the 6 November 2024. The registered provider was not present for 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 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 person in charge, staff member 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

The registered provider submitted a change in circumstance to TUSLA registration office on the 17 October 2024 in respect of change of the designated persons in charge. This change in circumstance was accepted by the registration office.

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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

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

Seven staff files including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

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

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

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members and 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)

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 members 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.

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)(a) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)—

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.

(2)

There were eighteen children attending the service supervised directly by three 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.

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

(1)(a)

There was a calm and happy atmosphere in the service as children learned through play during the morning session. A range of developmentally appropriate, creative and enriching experiences were available for all children.

Children enjoyed play experiences including tabletop activities, story time in the cosy rest area and free play supported by the staff. Children were encouraged to be independent as they dressed for outdoor play assisted by staff as needed. Seamless transitions were observed as children moved from one activity to the other.

A healthy snack was provided by parents and consisted of sandwiches, fruit, vegetables with water to drink. Milk was offered as an alternative option to children. Staff sat with children, conversation and interactions were encouraged as children enjoyed their snack.

Staff were positive towards children demonstrated by using individual names, maintaining eye contact during conversation and giving positive praise to children on the completion of activities. Good teamwork was observed between staff. An access and inclusion plan was in place for children who required extra support and assistance. Staff followed the services settling in policy as children attended for a short period adjusting to their new environment.

The service worked in partnership with parents in the following ways; a verbal handover on collection, a monthly newsletter is sent to parents, children's daily activities are shared with parents on a hand held electronic device. "My Learning Journal" depicting each child's play and work activities throughout the year is shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

The service had made links with the local community as the Garda had visited the service for the National Road Safety Beep Beep day. The grandparent day held recently was enjoyed by the children and their grandparents. The service achieved first place in the Westmeath County Council Eco Pre-school award, 2024.

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.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Adequate and suitable play equipment and materials were provided in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

(b)

Soft furnishings were provided in the pre-school room for children to rest and relax. A low-level bed is available for use for a child to sleep if required.

(3)(a)

The outdoor play was safe and secure surrounded by high level fencing. A natural grass and mulch surface area was noted. Toys and equipment included a large wooden climbing frame with steps and a slide, a swing set with two swings, a wooden wigwam and mud kitchen.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Suitable toys and materials that are age and stage appropriate were available to children. The interest areas in the pre-school room included a cosy rest area with library, dress up, a home area and construction area.

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 entrance door to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents. Safety checklists for the indoor and outdoor environments were available for review. The inspector signed the visitors book on arrival.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available. Warm running water, paper hand towel and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the pre-school room for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Natural ventilation was available through openable windows in the pre-school room. Mechanical ventilation was in working order in the sanitary accommodation.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed. A fire assembly point was noted to the side of the premises.

Outing:

Risk assessments for outings from the service were available and reviewed.

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.

(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.

(3)(a)(b)

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

(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)
Two adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation. A third adult held a paediatric first aid qualification.
- (2)(a)
A first aid box was available in the pre-school room.
- (b)
A first aid box was accessible to 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 fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 1 October 2024.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on the 26 April 2024.

The smoke alarms in the premises were serviced on the 30 August 2024.

(2)

The records were available for inspection by (a)(b)(c).

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the pre-school room.

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

Children were supervised in the indoor and outdoor environment during the inspection.

Staff supervised children when using the toilet and washing their hands.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

- (d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;*

Compliance Information

A notification of incident form was submitted to TUSLA Early Years Inspectorate on the 7 March 2024 in respect of children sustaining an injury requiring medical treatment.