

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018GY509
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Name of Service:	Little Hands Montessori and Afterschool Care
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Address of Service:	Cahergal, Tuam, Co. Galway.
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Eircode:	H54 C593
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Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Mannion and Martin Mannion.
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	19/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
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Title:	Early Years Inspector.
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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

The service is in a rural area of county Galway called Cahergal, near the town of Tuam. The service offers a part time care service from 9 am to 2 pm and a sessional service, Monday to Friday, for children aged between two and six years of age. The service consisted of one large playroom in Cahergal primary school. The service has a kitchenette for the preparation of food. The pre-school children have access to a secured outdoor play area to the rear of the premises for play activities, exploration and fresh air.

Staffing

The registered providers are not working on the premises daily and have appointed a manager. There is a named manager in charge and a named designated deputy. There is a total of four adults working in the service. Five adults hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

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

(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 service manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise as required in the service.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained for the duration of the inspection. Staff rosters indicated that either the designated person in charge or a deputy were available and on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.
- All seven staff files were reviewed which included the registered providers.
- (2)(a)&(b) Fourteen written validated references were on file from a past employer or reputable source for seven adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the seven adults working in the service. This was in adherence with the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Three adults worked outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months or more, while

over the age of 18 years and had the required police vetting disclosures.

- (4) Five adults had evidence of an award in Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.*
- (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) During the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.
- (2) The ratio of adults caring for children was maintained in the preschool rooms. Four adults cared for the 20 children attending the service in the morning and 4 adults cared for 14 children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) The staff roster demonstrated that more than two adults were available on the premises during the operation of the service.

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) &(1)(b)

Basic Needs

- The snacks supplied by the parents were healthy and nutritious. They consisted of sandwiches, crackers, cheese, fresh fruit pieces and yogurts, with water for the children when needed. The main meal of the day was provided by the service. A water table was available in the playroom where the children could access their water bottles as required.
- Crockery and plates were offered during children's snack times and were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children in the playroom.
- Children attending the service toileted independently or with some assistance or support by adults as required.
- The children's self-care was assisted and encouraged by adults for e.g., to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after using a tissue in the playroom.
- Appropriate child size tables and chairs were available in the playroom.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of child size couches in a designated cosy area.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move around the playroom themselves, to explore the various special interest areas.

Supporting Relationships

- Adults were observed to be thoughtful, supportive and reassuring whilst caring for the children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive and appropriate behaviours. Children could identify, name and explore their feelings both positive and negative.
- The adults encouraged children to interact and to engage with a range of materials, activities and equipment in their environment, based on the child's choices, age and stage of development.

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- Communication with parents was provided with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school including the child's interests, preferences and play activities engaged in. The service used a multi media application for sharing photos, updating parents and providing general information of up coming events. Information was also provided at drop off and collection times or by phone call. Information about the service and general information was displayed on the notice board, inside the main entrance to the service.
- The children's art and craft materials were collated into learning journals and given to parents and guardians on a seasonal basis. Play activities and experiences were developmentally appropriate and suitably challenging for the children.

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 responder was rostered during the operation of the service. Three adults were trained and had in date first aid responder certification.

(a) & (b) A fully equipped first aid box was safely stored in the playroom and was available to a preschool child during the operation of the 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were completed by the service. The last fire drill took place on the 23 January 2025.
- (b) Up-to-date records of the number, type and maintenance service were available for the fire-fighting equipment and the smoke alarm system. The most recent service date recorded for the fire-fighting equipment was 19 March 2024 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 19 March 2024.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance for 30 children on a part-time day-care basis and was valid until the 27 March 2025.