

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020MH002		
Name of Service:	Early Buds Montessori School Age Service		
Address of Service:	Collon Road, Slane, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	C15 FWY8		
Name of Registered Provider:	Alison Hickey, Frank Hickey		
Service type:	Part Time, Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	06/03/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM 9
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham		
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 parttime service is located in an urban setting in the outskirts of Slane village. A service is provided to children aged between 3 years to 6 years, a sessional service from 9.30am to 12.30pm with some children availing of parttime hours until 2pm, a registered school age service is also provided. The premises is a single storey building with 3 rooms (two rooms are used for the sessional service and the other room is used for school aged children), sanitary accommodation and kitchen are also available.

Staffing

There were 4 adults present on the day of inspection and were working directly with the children. Seven staff members are employed in the service this includes the registered provider and two staff members who work with the school aged children.

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 registered provider, manager, 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.

(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.”

Compliance Information

- 1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.
- (2) Seven files were reviewed, and the following was noted.
- (a) & (b) Fourteen validated written references were available for the staff members.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the seven staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes for one staff member as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.
 - (d) Police vetting was available for the staff member who had resided outside the state for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.
- (4) The staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- (6A) One staff member was employed under the access and inclusion model.

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) (1) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on arrival of the inspectors. There were two care rooms in operation.

(2) The following adult to child ratios were observed,

- **First Year ECCE room** had 5 children ranging in age from 3 years to 4 years being cared for by 1 staff member.
- **Montessori room** had 17 children ranging in age from 3 years to 4 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

The registered provider was also present and available to the rooms where required.

(8) (a) According to the staff roster presented to the Early Years Inspectors the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present 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

Basic Needs of the Children:

The registered provider and staff members ensured that each child’s learning, development, and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service. Children were engaged in a variety of appropriate activities during the inspection including eating together, playing in the outdoor area and story time with the staff. Children were encouraged to be independent appropriate to their age and stage of development, for example, children were observed putting on their own coats and hats before they went to the outdoor area. During activities staff used opportunities to extend children’s learning and development. Staff were observed playing with the children in the outdoor area. Staff were observed to be constantly engaged with the children in their care. For example, in the outdoor area staff were observed playing and initiating games with the children. The parents and guardians supplied their children with lunches and drink requirements whilst attending the service. Lunchtime was a sociable, unhurried time with the children sitting with their friends around adjoined tables to foster a sense of community. The adults sat with the children whilst they ate and assisted with opening cartons and disposing of packaging when as required. Toileting was gently supervised by staff members and children encouraged to independently wash hands, flush toilets and discard of paper towels. A rest area was appointed within the playroom for the children to opt out of scheduled activities if they so wished.

Supporting Relationships Around the Children:

The staff members were observed to work well as a team with smooth transitions between activities. They were found to be patient, friendly and engaging with the children, both on a one-to-one basis and individually when facilitating toileting and organising the lunch break. Low tones and good eye contact was maintained, and the children were relaxed, happy and familiar with the staff.

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-

(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, or

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Cosy areas consisting of soft seating/mats were available if a child needed to take a break from activities and rest. Stackable beds were available should a child wish to rest during the day.

(3)(a) The outdoor space was enclosed with walls and a secure gate. The surface area consisted of soft surface area with one area covered where the mud kitchen and sand area were accommodated.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Children took in their own lunch from home consisting of sandwiches, yogurts, fruit and a drink. A second snack taken in from home prepared by the children's parents was provided at 13.00hours for the children who availed of parttime hours.

General Safety:

- The main entrance door to the service was secured and controlled by staff to prevent the pre-school children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school.
- During conversations with staff members, they advised they were very observant of any food provided that had the potential risk of choking and immediately halved or cut food into smaller pieces.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for 1 staff member. However, the vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

General Safety: Corrective & Preventive Action

Garda vetting has been reapplied for the staff member and received; a copy was sent to the early years inspector. The manager will keep a list and be aware who is due for garda vetting renewal before it expires.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

A copy of the garda vetting was received by the early year's inspectorate on the 3rd June 2025.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the noncompliance in Regulation 23.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)A record was kept of each child's time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

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) Persons trained in first aid response (FAR) were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)(a)(b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous positions in each pre-school room in the service and immediately available for the children at all times

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) A written record was available of fire drills which were completed monthly in the service. The last recorded fire drill was 12th February 2025.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises was not available for inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Fire extinguishers and smoke alarm serviced following inspection.
Annual maintenance of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms will be carried out.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider submitted a copy of the maintenance certificates for the fire extinguishers on the 04/04/2025 and the smoke alarms on the 02/04/2025.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider addresses the non-compliances in Regulation 26.

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 valid from 28/03/2024 to 27/03/2025. The insurance provided cover for 30 children attending a parttime service.