

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020MO002
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Name of Service:	An Scoil Beag Montessori
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Address of Service:	St Colmcilles NS, The Quay, Westport, Co. Mayo
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Eircode:	F28 W267
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mairead Hastings
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
Inspection undertaken by:	B Lavin
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).

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Description of service

An Scoil Beag Montessori is located on the grounds of St Colmcille's National School in Westport, Co Mayo. The service is registered to provide sessional services to children aged from two to six years of age. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 08:30 and 11:45. The premises is a single storey, demountable building with one playroom and sanitary facilities. Children have access to enclosed outdoor play areas to the rear and front of the building.

Staffing

There are three staff working in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children. There are two students on placement in the service.

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 and health, welfare and development of child. 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 -

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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, 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.*

(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.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) There was a designated person in charge in the service and a named person was available to deputise as required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the registered provider was on the premises and facilitated the inspection.
- (2) Discussion with the registered provider and review of records showed there were four adults including the registered provider employed in the service at the time of the inspection. In addition, there were two students on placement in the service on the day of inspection. One of the students was aged under 18 years and one over 18 years. Both students were supervised at all times by qualified staff. The following vetting documentation was available for the staff and students:

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- (a) Seven of the required 12 written validated references were from past employers.
- (b) Five written and validated references were from a reputable source other than a past employer.
- (c) A garda vetting disclosure was available for the five adults in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years for two of the adults.
- (d) International police vetting documents were available on file for one adult.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to staff members being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the four staff who worked directly with the children.

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) During the period of inspection there were adequate numbers of adults working with the pre-school children attending the service.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained. There were 21 children present on a sessional basis aged from 3 to 5 years old with 3 staff members caring for the children.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(i) There was a staff roster in place in the service with the required details.

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:

- During the inspection the children ate a snack which consisted of fruit, yogurt, crackers, ham, sandwiches and cheese provided from home, seated at low tables and chairs and supervised by the adults who gave assistance where it was needed and encouraged conversation with the children during mealtime.
- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks without being rushed. The atmosphere during snack time was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. Staff encouraged and supported children to become more independent in toileting practices.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement in the preschool room and outdoor area. They were able to explore several different interest areas while outdoors.
- In the playroom the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of soft cushions and rugs in a designated cosy corner area.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.

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- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.

Supporting relationships

- The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.
- The staff were actively involved in children's play, where appropriate initiating games and joining in when invited to by children.
- The staff behaved in a way that created a positive atmosphere, having frequent social conversations, joint laughter and showing affection.
- The staff listened to the voice of the child as they communicated their needs, thoughts and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children's cues, gestures and body language.
- Soft tones were used with the children, along with the child's individual name, getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
- Staff guided and supported children who needed more help. Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion for example using personal greetings, one to one learning support and giving appropriate encouragement.
- Staff communicated with parents and guardians by sharing knowledge and observations of the child's interests, strengths, developmental and care needs, approaches to learning, changes in their life and any other concerns at drop off and collection times and through a bespoke childcare application.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them and talking to the children in a variety of ways- discussing, questioning, modelling, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.

Programme of activities

- There was a varied programme of activities offered to the children daily. This programme was developed with both short term and long-term goals. Recent themes include social skills development, world book day, families, Mother's Day and baby animals. These themes focus on language development, imaginative immersive play and sensory play.
- Each child had a learning journal which reflected the child's work and development over the year and showed their art and craft work.

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- Children's choice was included in the development of play activities and emerging interests was developed within the care room. The children were given choice in participating in larger group activities or to play in smaller groups. Children had a choice in the games they participated in. Staff members were observed to create play opportunities such as arts and crafts and sensory games following the lead of children.

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

During the inspection the registered provider and staff ensured that the preschool children were adequately supervised in the indoor and outdoor environments.

The adult child ratio was maintained in each playroom and in the outdoor play area. This was evidenced by the staff roster and observations by the inspector on the day.

To reduce the risk of a child leaving the service unsupervised the service had implemented a head count before going out to the outdoor area and a check prior to returning to the playrooms. This was to ensure that all children were accounted for in the outdoor area.

It was observed on the day that the staff ensured that children were supervised during snack in the playroom, in the outdoor play area and while children used the sanitary areas. The staff were observed to supervise children by sound and by sight.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 27/03/2027, was for a sessional service, for a maximum number of 22 children. The insurance covered the following:

- public liability
- personal accident
- insurance against fire and theft

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buildings cover

outings undertaken as part of the service provision.