

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020SO001
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Name of Service:	Mini Einsteins Montessori and After School
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Address of Service:	Cregg Village, Cregg, Rosses Point, Co. Sligo
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Name of Registered Provider:	Joanne Mooney
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	22/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	54	PM	41
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Killeen
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

Mini Einsteins is located within Cregg House near Rosses Point in Co Sligo. It currently caters for a maximum of 55 preschool children and operates on a full day care basis from 9am to 6pm daily. The service also provides an afterschool service.

Staffing

There were eleven staff employed to work in the service, nine who were present on the day of inspection. The nine staff include the registered provider and five staff working directly with the preschool children. Two staff were assigned to work with school-aged children, and one staff member was employed in the kitchen. The registered provider was present and working directly with the children. In addition, there were two transition students on placement in the service. One additional staff member, employed in an administrative role, was not present on the day of 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,20,21,22,23,27, and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

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

An Immediate Action Notice was issued under Regulation 9 Management and recruitment :Two staff on the premises with access to pre-school children had no Garda Vetting. Please see body of the report for more detail.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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,*
- (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) The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.

(2) On the day of inspection, nine adults were present in the preschool service. This included the registered provider, five childcare practitioners working directly with the children, and one staff member dedicated to the kitchen. Additionally, two transition year students were on-site for their work experience placement. The following vetting information was available for eleven adults:

- (a) Seven written validated references from past employers for four of the adults. Six reference from past employers for four adults.
- (b) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for nine adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (c) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4) Six of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(9) (2) (a)

- (1) Eight references were not on file for five staff members.
- (2) Four references on file for two adults had not been validated, and one reference did not appear on the adults CV.
- (3) Gap in CV for two adults.
- (4) No ID or CV available for one adult.

(9) (2) (C)

- (5) The registered provider did not ensure that all staff working directly with children had appropriate vetting disclosures in place. On the day of inspection, two staff members who had access to preschool children did not have Garda vetting on file. The absence of Garda vetting poses a significant risk to the safety and welfare of children attending the service. An Immediate Action Notice was issued on 22nd October, and a response was received from the registered provider on 23rd October confirming that both staff members would not continue to work in the service until Garda vetting had been obtained.

9 (4)

- (6) On the day of the inspection, it could not be established if one staff member had the required qualification to work directly with the preschool children.
- (7) One staff member observed working with the preschool children did not have the required qualifications to work with preschool children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

9 (2) (a)

All c. v's have been updated and validated including staff identification. Going forward I will make sure to get all relevant information before employee's start.

9 (2) (C)

The garda vetting for the two staff on site on the day of inspection has now been obtained and is on file for each staff.

9 (4)

On the day we had our inspection unfortunately my staff members were sick. I now have a qualified relief worker on standby should this happen again.

Supporting documentation submitted:

- (1) Six references received for submitted. No reference for two staff members received.

- (2) Validated reference sent in
- (3) Undated CV for two adults.
- (4) ID and cv sent in for one staff.
- (5) All outstanding garda vetting has been sent in by the register provider.
- (6) No evidence submitted for international police vetting for one staff who required it.

Summary Comment

Following receipt of the corrective and preventive action and the evidence received the requirements for 9 (2) (a) remain outstanding two validated reference for two staff have not been received. The requirement for 9 (2) (c) international police vetting for one staff who requires it remain outstanding the registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2)
The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
At approximately 09.:41am
 - Pre-school Room 1: 2 adults cared for 22 children aged 4 to 5 years of age.
 - Pre-school Room 2: 2 adults cared for 22 children aged 3 to 4 years of age.
 - Pre-school Room 3: 2 adults cared for 10 children aged 2.7 years to 3 years of age.

The following adult child ratios were observed at approximately 14:31pm:

- Pre-school Room 1: 2 adults cared for 11 children aged 4 to 5 years of age.
- Pre-school Room 2: 2 adults cared for 19 children aged 3 to 4 years of age.
- Pre-school Room 3: 1 adult cared for 11 children aged 3 years to 4 years of age.

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 19 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.*

(2) *A registered provider-*

(a) *(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or outdoor space other than such a space specified in paragraph (4), the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable.*

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The service consisted of three large playrooms designated for preschool children, each assigned to a specific age group. All rooms were equipped with suitable indoor play facilities tailored to the developmental needs of the children attending. The rooms were bright and visually engaging, decorated with Halloween-themed items including pumpkins and children’s artwork. Each room featured clearly defined areas of interest and an orderly arrangement of materials that supported various aspects of children's learning and development. The following is a description of the facilities in each room. In preschool room 1, the room included child-sized tables, chairs, and a soft couch. Defined interest areas featured a kitchen play area, sensory play zone, a cosy reading corner, and a dress-up area. Open low-level shelving units held a variety of resources including small world toys, blocks, shape sorters, and musical instruments. These materials supported imaginative play, early literacy, fine motor development, and sensory exploration. In preschool room 2 the children had access to playdough and shape cutters, construction blocks, and art and craft supplies such as glue, coloured paper, and markers. These items were stored on low-level shelving and tables, promoting independence and choice. The room also featured

imaginative play setups including a dolls’ kitchen and a themed “baby concert” area. A “digestive system book corner” was available, with books displayed at child height. Additional resources included jigsaws, peg pins, and board games. These materials supported creativity, problem-solving, hand-eye coordination, and early literacy skills. In Preschool room 3 resources included playdough, construction blocks, and a variety of colouring and craft materials, presented on tables and stored on low-level shelving units. Open shelves also contained jigsaws, peg pins, art supplies, and a large selection of books. The room featured rest areas with wicker beanbags, board games, a large mirror, and a display of family tree pictures showing photographs of children's families. These resources supported emotional development, social interaction, fine motor skills, and identity awareness.

(b)
Stackable floor beds were available for older children if required, these were not observed to be used on the day of inspection. Each of the rooms caring for older children were equipped with suitable and comfortable rest areas including soft floor mats and soft cushions and sofas.

(2) (a)
The outdoor area was decorated with Halloween-themed items, including pumpkins. It was divided into three distinct sensory zones—sand, mud, and a larger play area—each securely fenced. The surface throughout was covered with artificial grass, with shock-absorbent tiles placed under equipment such as the slide and swings. Outdoor resources included a climbing frame, tree house, slide, swings, tyres for balancing, football goals, picnic tables, and a wooden shop structure. These facilities supported physical development, gross motor skills, imaginative play, and social interaction.

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

There was a sufficient quantity of play materials for the number of children attending the service which was available on low level shelving and was observed to be easily accessible to the children. Additional resources and equipment were stored in various locations within the service to allow for toy rotation. The materials available for children’s use were reflective of the age and stage of development of children attending. They were developmentally appropriate, challenging and provided opportunities for meaningful play experiences.

Play items were observed to be made of durable, easy to clean material which was easy to maintain. Large items were secured to prevent the risk of injury by toppling over and there were no hazards observed on the equipment

available to children both indoors and outdoors. The equipment was laid out and adequately resourced to allow children to play together in pairs or small groups. Comfortable adult seating was available in the room. There was an adequate quantity of tables and chairs provided in the service which were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children.

There was a designated outdoor play area on site which contained a range of equipment and resources that provided for the play, development and movement of children. There was adequate space for children to move around the area and play together in large groups. The equipment was well maintained, developmentally appropriate and safe for use by the children attending the service.

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

All snacks are provided by parents each day. Food arrives in the morning in the children’s lunch bags, and any perishable items are stored in the fridge upon arrival. Children also bring their own drinks from home, which are available throughout the session.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, it was observed that the service did not provide adequate and nutritious hot food for children attending on a full day care basis. Children were seen consuming snacks brought from home, and the service provided beans, toast, and oranges alongside with these snacks. A review of the rolling weekly menu indicated that hot meals consisted of soup with brown bread, beans on toast, warm wraps, sausage rolls, and ham and cheese toasties, accompanied by platters of fruit, cucumber, cheese, and crackers. While the service policy states that food is not provided, Regulations requires that children in full day care receive adequate and nutritious food.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) As regards to the food, due to the size and layout of our kitchen facilities, we are not in a position to safely prepare full hot meals on site. We do provide appropriate hot food options daily, alongside freshly prepared sandwiches and fruit, all in line with food safety guidelines. Our current food provision meets the children’s needs and is well received by parents and is kept under regular review.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Email from register provider stating the hot food cannot be prepared on site but appropriate food options are available. Consultation with parents as stated by the register provider and review of food provided under regular review.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 22 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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 was secure upon the inspector's arrival to the service and remained secure throughout the inspection.
- All toys and equipment were observed to be in good condition, free from sharp edges and pinch points.
- The service was in a clean and hygienic condition on the day of inspection. Cleaning records evidenced that a cleaning schedule was in place and cleaning was conducted daily.
- Child safety locks were in place on cupboard doors.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- All electrical flexes and cables were in good condition and out of children's reach.
- Blind cords were secured in each area.
- The kitchen and storage areas were inaccessible to children and cleaning materials frequently used in the service were stored on high level shelf out of children's reach.
- The outdoor area was secured with high fencing and gates to prevent a preschool child leaving the service unsupervised.
- The outdoor area was fitted with a soft fall surface to minimise a risk to children from trips and falls.

Infection Control:

- The inspector observed surfaces being wiped down and cleaned frequently throughout the day.
- Warm water, soap and paper towels were available for effective handwashing for children and adults.

- Adults supported the children to wash their hands after returning from outdoors, before eating and after toileting and nappy changing.
- Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of waste.
- The pre-school rooms and adjoining sanitary facilities were in a clean and hygienic condition. Staff members were observed cleaning play areas and frequently touched surfaces after children's use and prior to snack time.
- Liquid soap and paper towels were available in the playrooms and in the children's sanitary accommodation to support hand washing practices. Children were observed washing their hands at regular intervals including after using the toilet, and before snack.
- The care rooms and sanitary accommodation was adequately ventilated by way of openable windows or mechanical ventilation in cases where no window was available.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had a detailed individual care plan in place for one child who had been prescribed anti-epileptic medication. The plan clearly outlined the steps staff should follow in the event that administration of the medication was required.
- The medication was stored securely, out of reach of children, and was clearly labelled and in date. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the care plan and were able to discuss its contents and procedures with the inspector.

Fire Safety:

- All emergency exits were free from obstruction. Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed at every exit point throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for two staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting.
2. During the inspection, the water temperature at one of the children's wash hand basins was found to exceed the maximum safe limit of 43°C. This poses a potential risk of scalding. It is acknowledged that, once brought to the attention of the registered provider, the basin was immediately put out of bounds to prevent access and mitigate risk

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) Renewal of garda vetting for two staff who require it has been acquired and forwarded to inspector for review.
- (2) The temperature has been lowered and regular checks by staff are in place to monitor this. My plumber was called and reduced the temperature of the water the next day.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) Renewed garda vetting checks for required staff received.
- (2) Email from register provider informing of review by Plummer of works completed to lower temperatures.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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

On the day of the inspection, it was evident that children are supervised at all times, this was observed by staff engaging in supervision by sight and sound. Staff supported children when required. This was observed both indoors and outdoors. play, mealtimes and toileting routines.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was written documentation to evidence that there was adequate insurance in place for full day care for 55 children from 28/03/2025-27/03-2026.