

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021CC005
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Name of Service:	Blarney Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Cluain Ard, Monacnappa, Blarney, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T23 F6DH
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Name of Registered Provider:	Claire Connolly, Marguerite Morley
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	29
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	S O'Brien
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	N/A
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Description of service

Blarney Montessori School was established in September 2021 as a privately owned sessional and part time service for children aged two to six years. The service operates from 9:30am to 1pm, Monday to Friday. The service offers a Montessori and play based approach to learning. The service operates from a newly built bungalow style premises in a new residential development within walking distance of Blarney village. There are two care rooms named the Castle room and the Garden room, and sanitary facilities for children and staff. The service has a large, fully enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the building.

Staffing

The service is operated jointly by two registered providers and employs five members of staff. On the day of inspection, four staff members were working directly with the children and the registered providers were available for additional support if required. A contractor was also in the service providing musical activities to the 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 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 registered providers, 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 had a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise in the service.
 - (b) The designated person in charge were on the premises for the duration of the inspection and were on the premises at all times while the service was in operation. This was outlined clearly on a staff roster that was available and reviewed.
 - (c) There is a clear management structure in the service and all staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities within the service.

- (2)
- Eight recruitment files were available and reviewed including the registered providers and contractor's files.
- (a) Eight of the sixteen references were from a past employer and were validated.
- (b) Eight of the sixteen references were from a reputable source and were validated.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the five staff members, two registered providers and the contractor from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána and adhered to the Early Years Regulatory Notice on the renewing of Garda Vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was not required as no staff member or contractor had lived outside of a state for longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) Seven of the staff members including the registered providers held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from level 5 to level 8 on the national qualifications framework or a qualification deemed equivalent by the minister. The contractor who was non-qualified, was supervised at all times by staff while working 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.*
- (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) There were adequate staff to care for the children in attendance in the service.
- (2) On arrival to the service, there were eleven preschool children aged from two years six months to three years six months in the Garden room being cared for by two staff members. In the Castle room, there were eighteen preschool children aged from three to five years, being cared for by two staff members.

The roster indicated the staff working in each care room and showed that there was sufficient staff available for break cover, therefore ensuring the minimum adult to child ratios were being adhered to at all times.

- (8) (a) The staff roster was reviewed and indicated that two staff were on the premises at all times while the service was in operation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A sample of twelve children's records were assessed and all forms were completed and contained the information outlined from (a) to (i).

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

The following records were reviewed on inspection:

(k) A sample of twelve accident and incident records for children who attend the service were reviewed and contained all relevant information in relation to any accident or incident that had occurred between November 2024 and January 2025.

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:

- Children were observed washing their hands after outdoor play and before mealtimes.
- Children were supported with toileting when needed in a kind manner. Nappy changing was not observed. A nappy changing facility was available if required.
- The staff were aware of the individual care needs of the children and ensured that each child's needs were met.
- Snacks and meals were provided by the parents and guardians of the children. Some children communicated to the staff that they were hungry before the scheduled time for meals, and this was facilitated by the staff.
- Children were observed freely moving around the care rooms.

- A cosy corner was available in both care rooms to allow for children to partake in quiet activities such as mindfulness or rest which supported the children's wellbeing.

Supporting Relationships:

- Family pictures were displayed in the care rooms to support the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- Staff were observed speaking to parents on arrival to the service. An electronic app was used to communicate information to the parents and guardians.
- Staff were observed communicating to the children in kind and respectful ways and ensured they were at the child's level when speaking to them.
- Staff were observed supporting children with putting on their coats and opening their lunches while also promoting independence.

Programme of Activities:

- During circle time in the Garden room, the children spoke about and played an 'I Spy' game that was based on the theme of the healthy eating.
- Art and craft activities that were made by the children were hanging on the walls.
- Children in the Garden room were observed colouring which supported gross motor development.
- Children in the Castle room, were observed exploring the outdoor area for bugs and other wildlife with the support of the staff. Role play was observed as the children were 'Bug Explorers'.
- Playdough was available to the children in the Castle room which was made as a group activity and supported sensory development.
- Physical movement was supported through the use of the outdoor area for all children in the service.
- Activities observed throughout the day were based on the interests of the children and the children's voices were listened to if they wanted to partake in a different activity. This was observed at several times, such as at circle time and showed the children that their opinion was valued.
- Music and song activities were carried out by a contractor in both care rooms which the children were observed to enjoy.

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:

- External doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised access.
- Internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas.
- Toys and equipment were observed to be in good condition and free from pinch and crush points.
- Heavy furniture such as shelving that may tip over had been fully anchored to prevent injury.
- Flexes and cables observed were out of reach to children.
- The outdoor area was a safe and secure area for children to play at the time of inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely and out of reach to children at the time of inspection.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, soap and paper towels were available in the sanitary area for handwashing. Water temperatures of 29.3°C to 31.4°C were recorded in the handbasins in the sanitary areas.
- Staff were observed cleaning the tables in the care rooms before mealtimes using antibacterial cleaning products.
- Children's lunches were stored in a refrigerator to prevent perishable foods from spoiling.

Administration of Medication:

- Administration of medication was not observed on the day of inspection.
- The staff discussed a care plan that was in place for a child who requires an adrenaline autoinjector. The staff were aware of the location of the emergency medication and the procedure to follow in the event of the medication needing to be administered.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were clear and unobstructed.

Outing:

- The registered providers stated that outings do not take place in the service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) Attendance books were available for both the Castle and Garden rooms and indicated each preschool child attending the service was checked in and out on a daily basis.

(3) (a) (b) The inspector was asked to check in and out on a visitor book which was approved by a staff member on arrival and departure. A staff checking in and out record was available for review. These records were kept in writing on a daily basis.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider insured the service to operate as a part time service and was insured for thirty-three children from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025.