

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021CC006			
Name of Service:	Bright Beginnings Montessori			
Address of Service:	Rathbarr National School, Castlefreke, Clonakilty, Co. Cork			
Eircode:	P85 E542			
Name of Registered Provider:	Carmel O'Donovan			
Service type:	Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	09/09/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	n/a
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78			
Inspection undertaken by:	M. O Reilly			
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			

Description of service

Bright Beginnings Montessori is a private operated service that provides sessional care and is registered to accommodate children aged 2 to 6 years. The service currently caters for children from the age of 2 years 6 months to 6 years and for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. While the service is registered to operate from 09:00 hours to 12:30 hours. The current daily opening hours are from 09:00 to 12:00 hours each day Monday to Friday. The service operates from a room located in the main building of Rathbarry National School. The national school premise is a detached one storey building located in a rural setting outside the village of Rathbarry. There is one Montessori room and the children's toilet is beside the room. The adults have access to the school staff toilet. The service has their own designated secured outdoor play area situated on the grounds of the national school. The outdoor play area is located across the corridor from the Montessori room.

Staffing

There were two staff employed to work directly with the early years children including the named registered provider and the person in charge. Currently this sessional service is a single-handed operated service. The staff who work directly with the early years children all hold a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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, person in charge 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) There was a named person in charge.

(b) The person in charge was present on the premise on day of the inspection.

(2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for 2 staff.

(a) Of the required four references, all references were from previous employers with the required records of validation on file.

(b) Not applicable as all references were from past employers.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the two adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) A police vetting record was on file for the one staff member who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)

There was evidence that the two staff members had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications, or a qualification deemed 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.

(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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)—

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(1)

The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in the Montessori room on day of the inspection.

(3) On the morning of the inspection there was the person in charge in attendance with 9 early years children. The registered provider came later to assist with the inspection process and stayed for the remainder of the inspection.

(8)

(c) This sessional service is operated by one staff member single-handedly on a daily basis. The named person in charge operates the service four days a week and the registered provider operates the service single handedly one day a week. The registered provider is the named second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge and is within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency. The person in charge is the emergency person available to the registered provider when she operates the service single handedly one day a week.

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) to (i)

Ten children's registration forms were reviewed and found to contain all of the elements of information as required by Regulation 15 (a) to (i) inclusive.

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

- The service promoted healthy eating and the food provided by the parents and guardians for the mid-morning snack was observed to be healthy and nutritious.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. Self-toileting by the children was encouraged. The staff members were observed to assist where required each of the children when hand washing and hand drying, and the children were supported and encouraged prior to eating and post toileting.
- Staff were observed to interact in a caring manner with the children building their confidence and communication skills within the setting. The children were encouraged to participate in activities of their

choice such as arts and crafts, painting. The children were observed happily chatted together as they transitioned easily between activities and between indoor and outdoor play.

- During observed tabletop activities, the children were supported and encouraged by the staff, who acknowledged their efforts and achievements.
- The person in charge informed the inspectorate that there was an online application used to share information weekly with parents and guardians regarding the theme, associated play activities, songs and stories completed. Phone calls, a messaging application and informal face to face discussion at arrival and collection times, were also incorporated.
- The programme of care in place in the service was observed to be Montessori, play based and child led in approach.
- The children were observed playing outdoors. The person in charge informed the inspector that the children accessed this area daily. Prior to the children going to play outdoors they were assisted by the staff in dressing themselves in their coats and hats.
- The children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive way by the two staff and each child was given individual praise, reassurance and attention.

Physical and Material Environment

- The Montessori room was furnished with an adequate number of child sized tables and chairs, low shelving, child sized armchairs and a variety of play materials that were mainly Montessori based. All play material and equipment were maintained in good condition and met the needs of the children.
- The Montessori room afforded children the ability to move freely, as they participated in various activities, such as imaginary play and tabletop activities.
- There was a wall mounted book rack, home corner, a fine motor skills area and a great selection of Montessori play equipment. The room was furnished with sufficient child sized tables and chairs.
- There was a designated outdoor play area provided beside the premise located within the grounds of the primary school. The outdoor play area had a combination of an artificial grass and cement surface. There was a selection of interest areas available such as a play kitchen, a low slide, a low see saw, a stone area for digging and a selection of push and pull toys. that were all used by the children while playing outdoors.

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

- The children’s parents and guardians provided all food items and the children had their own water bottle.
- Lunches were stored in snack boxes and stored in the service fridge.
- Healthy, nutritious lunches were observed being eaten at the mid-morning snack such as sandwiches, rice cakes, rolls, yogurts, a selection of fruits, chopped and diced vegetables

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:

- On the inspector’s arrival at the service, the main entrance door to the service was found to have been secured and was maintained secure when not in use. The service also has their own door within the school to access when going to and from the designated outdoor play area located across the corridor.
- There were no cleaning agents accessible to the children.
- The first aid box was appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children’s reach in the playroom in operation.
- There were high openable windows that were not accessible to the children.
- The window blind cords were safely secured by wall brackets.
- The light fittings were provided with protective light covers.
- The outdoor play area was adequately secured with the main school building on three sides and a wall and one gate with a lock at adult height at the other side.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap and single use paper towels were located in a wall dispenser in the children’s toilets.

- There was no thermostatically controlled hot water at the two wash hand basins in the children's toilet on the inspectors arrival to the service. The dial on the water heater located near the wash hand basins was adjusted. The issue was rectified.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- Visibly the premise was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Tables were observed to be sanitised after snack time.
- The children's coats and bags were appropriately stored on wall hooks on the corridor outside the Montessori room.

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 did ensure that there was one staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certification on file indicated that the two staff members held current up to date training.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises

(b) The fully equipped first aid box was available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 13 June 2025. The service was closed for July and August. The service had reopened after the summer break and planned to do a fire drill within the next week.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced on the 13 December 2024 and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced on 11 November 2024.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for a maximum of 11 children until 27/03/2026. The records detailed the category of service covered which was sessional care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.