

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2024RN001 | | |
| Name of Service: | Na Fea Montessori Preschool | | |
| Address of Service: | St. Marys National School, Glebe, Knockcroghery, Co. Roscommon | | |
| Eircode: | n/a | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Marie Mc Manus | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | |
| Date(s) of Inspection: | 04/10/2024 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 5 | PM n/a |

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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government buildings, Convent road, Roscommon town Co Roscommon |
| Inspection undertaken by: | A. Kennedy |
| 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

Description of service

This pre-school service is based in a primary school classroom, in the village of Knockcroghery, Co. Roscommon. An Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school sessional care programme is offered from 9.00hrs to 12.00hrs. The service can cater for a maximum of 22 children at any one time, for children aged between 2 and 6 years of age. A Montessori play-based pre-school curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided. Quiet rest areas are available for children to rest and relax. There is a designated secure outdoor play area located at the side of the primary school. The children have access under supervision to the primary school facilities, that is an impact absorbing pitch, a sensory area, and playground areas. The children have access to the school hall, during inclement weather.

Staffing

The registered provider works between this service and a second pre-school service in Athlone. Two adults are employed daily to work in the service. There is a named designated person in charge and a person available to deputise. A relief person is also available in event of staff absence. The four adults (including the registered provider) have at least a major award Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going training 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 announced and focused on the area of governance/ 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-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, 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.

(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 registered provider was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.

(2)(a) &(b)

The four staff files were reviewed.

Eight of the eight written validated references on file in respect of the four staff were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the four staff.

(d) Documentary evidence indicated that none of the staff, had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and therefore did not require police vetting.

(4) The four staff working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to Level 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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) Documentary evidence indicated that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children. At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained. On the day of the inspection, there were 5 children aged between 2 years 9 months and 3 years 6 months with three adults directly caring for these children.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Children had plenty of opportunities to move freely to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.

The service supported the children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with staff.

For example:

- assigning a key person to each child;
- showing respect for each unique child and developing their trust;
- being actively involved in children's play, where appropriate (initiating games, joining when invited to by children);

- behaving in a way that creates a positive atmosphere (having frequent social conversations, laughter and showing affection);
 - listening to the voice of the child as they communicate their needs, thoughts, and experiences both verbally and non-verbally, by reading children’s cues, gestures, and body language;
 - encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking, nurturing and comforting children.
 - using soft tones, the child’s individual name, and getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- Visual aids (picture and word reminders) and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning.
 - Displayed on the walls were posters, visual aids, artwork, and themes including “our weekly colouring”, “our family”, the children’s art displays of rainbows and halloween, the weather chart, “our birthdays”, nursery rhymes, colours, the world and the daily routine.
 - The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried.
 - The children were supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging, while in the service.
 - The service provided parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child, for example, verbal communication at drop of and collection times.
 - Staff adjusted the level of support provided to children depending on the child’s abilities, allowing for children’s partial participation and participation with support.
 - The children were observed playing in the home area with a selection of dolls and accessories, at tabletop activities including jigsaws, puzzles, sorting shapes, playing with accessories in the doll’s house. The children were observed in the construction area playing with blocks and garages with play accessories to include trucks and cars.
 - Montessori equipment to include practical life exercises and sensorial materials to include the pink tower, knobbed cylinders, and the broad stairs were stored on low level shelving and accessible to the children.
 - The children observed doing action songs, “ we are the energy army” warm up exercises, jumping jacks and actions songs imitating different animals with the staff members. The children were observed to enjoy these activities and action songs.

- The designated outdoor play area was to the side of the national school. Play equipment and materials provided in the outdoor area supports a range of physically energetic activities and play experiences. There were push cars, tractors, a construction bench (with a latch, door stopper, wheel and switch), a slide, a shop, an activity centre with slide, steps, swing and ball hoop.
- The registered provider advised that the children could also access under supervision the primary school facilities. There was a sensory area covered with impact absorbing surface with mounts, trees and planters to the front of the primary school. There were pitches, playground areas and planters to the rear of the national school.
- The staff listened to the children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times. The staff acknowledged and accepted children's feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children's actions and other's responses. The children were given choice on what to do next.
- Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner by the staff. It was observed that minor problems were handled promptly and positively by the staff.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.

(b)

- The snacks were supplied by the parents and consisted of a selection of sandwiches with various fillings, wraps, rice cakes and crackers. The children also had a selection of cheeses and fruits to include strawberries, apples, grapes and banana with water to drink.
- The children were given sufficient time to eat in an unhurried manner. The foods provided complied with the service's healthy eating policy. Healthy eating was promoted within the service.
- Drinking water was available for the children in the room and was accessible by the children throughout the session.
- On the day of the inspection, the children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their level of independence.
- The staff guided and supported children who needed additional help.
- The staff supervised children's hand washing before and after snack time, after toileting, after blowing their noses, after messy play and at drop off and collection times.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilets and did not have to wait to use the toilets.

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- The staff used the correct language surrounding toileting.
- It was advised by the registered provider that presently two children are wearing pulls. Privacy and dignity are afforded to these children as they are being changed.
- The children had the opportunity to rest or relax in a designated cosy area in the playroom.