

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD003
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Name of Service:	An Duine Beag, Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Ballynageeragh, Dunhill, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 DH33
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Name of Registered Provider:	Elaine Walsh
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	37	PM	15
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Building Cork Road, Waterford City
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw
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 Duine Beag, Montessori School is a privately run service in a purposely built premises beside the registered provider's home. It is located in rural Co Waterford and operates from 6:45 to 16:00 five days a week. The service is registered to care for up to 44 children for 3.5 hours in the morning reducing to 22 children afterwards. The children are aged from 2 to 6 years.

The building has two large care rooms with adjacent sanitary areas and space off the main room where children can be accommodated if they require a sleep.

There is a large outdoor area to the front of the building with both a hard and grassed surface.

The service is also registered as a school age service.

Staffing

There are 10 staff members employed in the service and the registered provider is rostered to work directly with 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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Regulation 9– Management and Recruitment;

Regulation 11 – Staffing Levels;

Regulation 15 – Record of a Pre-School Child;

Regulation 16 – Record in Relation to a Pre- School Service;

Regulation 19 - Health Welfare and Development of Child;

Regulation 22 – Food and Drink;

Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child;

Regulation 31 – Notification of Incidents.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record of a Pre-School Child and Regulation 16 – Record in Relation to a Pre-School Service.

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.

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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

(9)

(1)(a)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a person to deputise if required. On a review of the staff rosters and attendance sheets, it was evidenced that the registered provider or their deputy was available at all times.

(4)

On a review of the staff files, all staff who were employed to work directly with the children had 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.

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Non-Compliance Information

(9)(2)

Following a discussion with the registered provider, it was determined that they employed 10 staff members and these files were reviewed.

(a)(b)(c)(d) While it is acknowledged all the documentation required for staff in this regulation was available for nine staff members, documentation for one staff who had joined the service that day was unavailable. The registered provider, once it was acknowledged that Garda vetting and other vetting documents were not available, organised that the new staff member would work off site until all the required paperwork was received. The staff member left the premises at this time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(9)(2) The registered provider stated that the staff member works from home until the Garda vetting has been received and the required documentation has been inserted into the staff files.

A new procedure has been introduced where both the manager and deputy manager will sign off on the vetting documents once received.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the Garda vetting application.

A copy of the required vetting documents for the staff member.

Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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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)(2) During the inspection there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children. At 10:30 there were 5 staff working with 37 children and at 15:20 there were 3 staff caring for 15 children. The registered provider stated that there were three staff who do not work full time and are available to offer relief cover if required.

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.*

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Compliance Information

On a review of 12 registration forms, all the details required in this regulation was available.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

The required information (1) (b-k) was available in the statement of purpose and function, the policies, the parental contracts, the children registration forms and daily records maintained by the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (a) The registered provider did not ensure there was a record of experience for one staff member.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that the staff details have been complied and assembled in the staff folder. The manager and deputy manager will, going forward, collaboratively assemble and review staff folders on a fortnightly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the required documents was submitted.

Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The following was observed during the day:

The children spent the day predominantly outdoors. A staff member stated that as the weather had previously been so bad that the staff team were encouraging the children to play outdoors as much as possible. The main door of the care rooms which led directly to the outdoor area remained open throughout the day and children were observed coming into the rooms to get additional toys to enhance their play. Two children were noted to bring dolls outdoors to 'bring them shopping in their buggies'. Children were facilitated to move between both spaces if they preferred, for example, a child asked if they could come inside to play and spent a little time indoors and returned to the garden area again after short time.

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Children were aware of the daily routine and helped to organise their peers when making two lines to go indoors for snack. Older children were encouraged to care for and help the younger preschool children and staff offered words of encouragement and positivity when this occurred.

Children's independence was fostered throughout the day with staff supporting them to problem solve and talking out any issue that may have arisen during play. Children were encouraged by staff to move and set up the goal posts independently in the space they wanted for their 'pitch'.

Staff were caring and responsive to children's needs. A staff member was noted to cuddle a child who was upset and wait for them to tell why they were sad. The staff then encouraged the child to return to play but checked in with them 10 minutes later. They were observed to inform other member of the team about the issue that arose for that child.

Staff were observed to spend time with parents giving a verbal run down of their child's day at collection time. Staff also described how they use an online application to communicate with parents and if required, parents sometimes make an appointment to speak to the staff if they need more time and/or privacy.

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

Children were served toast at 11:00 with a drink. Children were observed to demonstrate their independence by collecting cups and plates once snack time was over. Snack time was a relaxed opportunity for the children to sit and chat while the children in the second pre-school room were overheard singing songs while waiting for the food to be served.

Non-Compliance

- Most children attending for more than five hours during the day were not offered a hot meal as required. While it is acknowledged that the food the children brought from home for lunch was nutritious, it was noted that only one child had warm pasta and the remaining children had food that did not require reheating or cooking. The Healthy Eating and Heating up Food from Home policy in the service did not include the requirement for parents to bring in food that can be cooked or reheated as part of the children's lunches.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that the food policy has been amended, and parents have been informed that a meal which can be reheated at lunch time, must be provided on a daily basis if their child is in the facility for five hours or more.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the amended policy.

A copy of the information issued to the parents.

Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on 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:

- On arrival, the entrance was secured to prevent unsupervised access or exit from the building.
- A weekly roster was available for review by the inspector. The staff sign in and out sheets corresponded with the roster.
- Children's attendance was recorded in a timely manner and there was a daybook where staff recorded if a child was not in attendance due to illness or an appointment.
- Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children.
- Children were not allowed access to the small kitchenette where the snacks were prepared.

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to wash their hand before eating.
- Warm water and soap were available to support effective hand washing.
- An up-to-date cleaning checklist was displayed in the service.

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Administration of Medication:

- Comprehensive care plans were in place for children who required medication for allergies and medical conditions. The registered provider described how external professionals had upskilled the staff in the administration of specialised medication.

Safe Sleep:

- There was a low bed with sheets and a cosy blanket for a child who required a sleep during the day.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(b) the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981);

Non-Compliance Information

(b)(d) The registered provider did not notify Tusla of an incident where a child had been diagnosed with a notifiable disease.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that all staff have been informed of the importance and requirement of the childcare service to notify of an outbreak of a notifiable disease. The procedure of submitting an incident form was discussed.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentation was submitted.

Summary Comment

The action and plan submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.