

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016GY011
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Name of Service:	The Growing Tree Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Cahergowan, Claregalway, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 X7KE
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Fleming
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	03/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan.
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

The service is in Claregalway village in a purpose-built Montessori sessional service. There are three playrooms, a kitchen unit, multi-purpose room and sanitary facilities. The service has an outdoor area at the front and side of the service and children have access to outdoor play in a secured outdoor play area. The service offers an Early Childhood Care and Education sessional care programme. The service caters for pre-school children aged between three and six years of age. The service opening hours are from 09.00 to 12.30, Monday to Friday.

Staffing

There are three adults working in the service which includes the register provider. The adults working directly with the children in the service have completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum of a level 6 to a level 7.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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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*

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(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 the named designated person in charge. There was a named person who could deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

All three adult files were reviewed.

(2)(a) There were four of the required six written and validated references from past employers available in respect of the adults working in the service.

(b) There were two of the required six written and validated references on file in respect of the adults from a source other than a previous employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the three adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d) No adult had worked outside the jurisdiction, for 6 months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age, therefore did not require police vetting for that jurisdiction.

(4) The registered provider ensured that all 3 adults working directly with children had a major award of a minimum of QQI level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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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.

(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) 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; there were 3 adults working in the service with 19 pre-school children.

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

15(1) (a) to (i)

A sample of 10 children's records were reviewed and had all the required information under this part of the Regulations.

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

19(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- Tables and chairs were appropriate for the age and stage of the development of the children.
- The snacks were supplied by the parents/guardians. Snacks were observed to be healthy and nutritious.
- Perishable items were stored in the service fridge belonging to the children.
- Cutlery and plates used during children's snack times were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- All children attending the service were toilet trained and toileted independently or with some assistance or support by adults as required.
- The children's self-care was assisted and encouraged by adults for example to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, being outdoors and after messy play.
- In the playrooms the children had the opportunity to rest or relax on soft seating in designated cosy areas.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by adults, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children were shown positive strategies to manage their behaviour during the session.
- There was a variety of special interest areas in the outdoor play areas.

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Programme of Activities and its Implementation:

- A key person system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The role of the key person was to liaise with parents and guardians, conduct observations and support each child's developmental needs.
- Each child had a learning journal showing their art and craft work and themes for the year.
- The emerging interests of the children were recorded to inform the short-term planning. This was recorded on notes on a white board.
- Transitions between activities were well planned by staff and were carried out in a calm and relaxed manner.
- Documented evidence of observations for children was available and linked to the overall curriculum planning.
- The service had documented evidence of short, medium and long-term planning to meet each child's stage of development.
- The theme of the week was 'Summer and Arctic Animals'.
- Children were observed in the outdoor area, circle time, free play, reciting poetry, speaking in Irish, snack time and arts/crafts.

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 service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children was available to the children attending the pre-school service. Two adults had current training in First Aid Responder and were rostered.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box in each of the playrooms, with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes were fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had in date adequate insurance for a sessional service which was valid to the 27th of November 2026.