

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

OTUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH026
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Name of Service:	Ferndale Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	Matthews Lane, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A92 K2RP
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Name of Registered Provider:	Miriam Rice
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	03/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM	43
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	D.Murray & AM. Cunningham
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Ferndale Creche & Montessori has been operating as a privately-owned full day care service since 2002. The service provides full day care and sessional care to children from 0 to 6 years and operates from 07:30am to 6:15pm Monday to Friday. Children who are eligible can participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is purpose-built, located in a separate building to the rear of registered provider's private residence and consists of the following care rooms.

Downstairs:

Nursery room which provides care for babies and children from 6 months to 2 years.

Wobbler room caters for children from 1 to 2 years.

Toddler room facilitates the care of children from 2 to 3 years.

Montessori room provides care and education to children from 2 years 8 months to 5 years.

Upstairs:

Montessori room provides care and education to children from 2 years 8 months to 5 years.

Other facilities in the service include an office, kitchen, children and staff sanitary areas and a cot room. Each of the 4 pre-school rooms on the ground floor have direct access to outdoor play areas. There are 5 outdoor spaces available to the children.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 2 managers and 14 childcare staff to work directly with the children in the service, one additional staff member is employed as a caretaker. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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

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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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the managers, 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.

(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 two managers were the designated persons in charge of the service and in the event that neither managers were present, a designated childcare staff member would deputise as required.

(b) The two managers were present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 10am on the morning of the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) All 18 staff files were reviewed.

There were 2 validated written references available for the 18 staff members either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and 17 staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice,

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requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 3 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) The registered provider and the 16 staff members who work directly with pre-school children in the service each held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 11 childcare staff caring for 62 children on the morning of the inspection. The 2 managers were also available to provide support to the care rooms as needed.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Nursery room there were 8 children ranging in age from 1 year 9 months to 2 years being cared for by 2 staff members. Seven children were attending on a full day care basis while 1 child was attending on a sessional basis.

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- In the Wobbler room there were 4 children ranging in age from 2 years to 2 years 4 months being cared for by 1 adult. All 4 children were attending on a full day care basis.
- In the Toddler room there were 12 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years being cared for by 3 adults. Nine children were attending on a full day care basis while 3 children were attending on a sessional basis.
- In Montessori room downstairs there were 18 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years being cared for by 3 adults. Eleven children were attending on a full day care basis while 7 children were attending on a sessional basis.
- In Montessori room upstairs there were 20 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years being cared for by 2 adults. Twelve children were attending on a full day care basis while 8 children were attending on a sessional basis.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in the service.

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

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Mealtimes in the service were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Staff sat at the table whilst the children ate engaging them in conversation and provided assistance to the children as required. Children had easy access to their drinking cups which were accessible in their care rooms.
- In the Nursery, Wobbler and Toddler rooms any child who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. All children went to sleep at the service designated sleep time after dinner at 12:00am.
- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions observed. The older children were encouraged to become independent and self-

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caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.

- The service embraces outdoor play and learning with all children observed enjoying meaningful, sustained play with their peers and staff members.
- Children were observed engaging in tabletop activities, art and crafts and free play with children afforded the opportunity to choose and change activities if they so wish. The curriculum was child led with the themes of the month being “Summer”, “Flowers” and “Sensory play” with art and craft work displayed to reflect these themes. Each child had “My Learning Journal” which recorded monthly observations and photographs of activities which demonstrated the child’s developmental progress throughout the year in the service. Children in the Montessori rooms were preparing for graduation and staff sat with children as they completed their learning journals.
- The staff worked well together as a team. Children sought out staff members who readily acknowledged and encouraged the children’s efforts and accomplishments.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members use a software application to communicate with parents and also spoke to parents at pick up time regarding activities pertaining to their children during the day.
- The staff encouraged the children to engage positively with each other by adopting simple social rules such as turn taking, sharing in play activities and resolving minor disputes. Children were given advance reminders to support transitions to a new activity and for mealtimes. The children appeared relaxed and happy in their environment.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

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Compliance Information

(1)(b) There was 1 cot room off the Nursery room with a total of 9 cots available for the younger children requiring sleep. Older children requiring sleep were facilitated on sleep mats in the Nursery room. Within the care rooms there were mats, soft furnishings and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest, if needed.

(3)(a) The 5 outdoor areas were enclosed with fencing and hedging with secure gates. The surface areas consisted of artificial grass, cement paving stones and soft tiled areas. Two partially sheltered area permitted outdoor activities in all types of weather.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The play resources in the care rooms were accessible, organised and stored on shelving which allowed the children to select and replace materials. The care room had areas of interest which included home areas, construction area, musical play equipment, animal baskets, book baskets beside cosy area, plastic/wooden building blocks, puzzles, dolls area, art and crafts materials, tuff trays with water and play materials and equipment.
- Equipment in the outdoor space included small slide, playhouses, ride on toys, pouring walls, childrens benches for outdoor dining and activities, wooden boat, sand and construction areas, see saw, climbing frames and mud kitchen. A storage shed and containers were available for the storage of additional toys and play equipment.

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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 service provides the main meal to the children attending on a full day care basis which is prepared on site. The children brought their own morning and afternoon snacks from home. A 4-week menu with a varied and nutritional choice of food to include meat, fish, chicken and a vegetarian option were available and on display in the service.

A selection of breakfast cereals and toast with butter was available for the children to have on arrival to the service. The morning rolling snack was served between 09:30 and 11:00am which the children brought from home. Dinner was served between 11:30 to 13:00pm which consisted of sausages, mash potatoes and vegetables. An evening snack was served between 3:30pm and 4:00pm which consisted of a cheese and jam sandwiches with fruit. Water was the drink of choice.

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:

The following safety measures were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The entrance doors and garden gates were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Indoor and outdoor risk assessments were carried out on a daily basis and documented on a daily risk assessment sheet.

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Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available at the wash hand basins downstairs in the service.
- The premises play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition. There was a process in place for the cleaning of toys and equipment on a daily and weekly basis. Tables were observed to be appropriately cleaned prior to and following meals and snacks.
- The children in the service were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were gently reminded and assisted when necessary to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Staff members wore individual aprons and gloves for nappy changing procedures. Children's hands were washed after they had their nappies changed.
- The service implemented effective soother management procedures, with all individually labelled soothers stored in personalised containers when not in use.

Safe Sleep:

The following safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰ C and between 18 to 22⁰ C in the care rooms used for sleep.
- A sleep log was available to record the position, colour and breathing pattern on all sleeping children at 10 minutes intervals.
- Block out blinds were available which created an atmosphere conducive to sleep.
- Children sleeping on sleep mats were supervised at all times.

Fire Safety:

The following Fire Safety practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- All emergency exit doors were accessible in the event of an evacuation.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

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Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. One staff members garda vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. A trampoline which is considered to be inappropriate equipment in an early year's setting was provided in the outdoor play area to the front of the premises. Trampoline use is not recommended for children under 6 years of age due to the safety risk and can only be used if prescribed as an individual therapeutic intervention. This is a recurring non-compliance which has not been addressed by the registered provider.
3. A trailing flex from the humidifier and the fan posed a trip hazard as they were accessible to the children in the upstairs Montessori room.

Infection Control:

4. Children were observed to use a communal cloth towel for drying their hands which posed a risk of cross contamination in the Montessori rooms. Single use hand towels were not available.
5. Bins in the Montessori and Toddler rooms were not foot pedal operated resulting in repeated handling of the bins by the children which posed a risk of cross infection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. On the day of the inspection, a new Garda Vetting disclosure was applied for in line with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice. The renewed Garda Vetting disclosure has since been received and placed on file. A Garda Vetting renewal monitoring system has been implemented to ensure all Garda Vetting disclosures are renewed before reaching three years from the date of issue. A record of vetting dates will be maintained and reviewed regularly by management, with advance reminders scheduled to ensure future renewals are completed within the required timeframe.

2. A trampoline policy is in place which includes requirements for one child at a time, continuous direct adult supervision, daily equipment safety checks, appropriate safety fittings and clear procedures for use. Educators are reminded of these procedures and their implementation has been reviewed.

The use of the trampoline is monitored through ongoing risk assessments, regular supervision of practice and periodic review of the Trampoline Policy.

3. Immediately following the inspection, the trailing electrical flexes for the fan and humidifier were secured to eliminate any potential trip hazard within the room. Equipment positioning was reviewed to ensure electrical leads are kept away from children's access and walkways at all times. The fan cable management system has been adjusted to ensure excess flex is securely anchored when in use. The humidifier was removed from the room until an adequate cable organiser was purchased.

All educators have been reminded to ensure electrical equipment is positioned safely and that trailing flexes are secured and neat before the room is made available to children. Daily safety checks include a specific check that electrical leads are safely managed and do not present a trip or access hazard. Management will continue to monitor compliance through regular room safety inspections.

Infection Control:

4. A single-use cloth hand towel system has been implemented whereby each child uses an individual hand towel once before placing it into a designated laundry bin. Fresh towels are readily available throughout the day to support effective hand hygiene and minimise the risk of cross-contamination.

The Handwashing policy has been updated to reflect the single-use hand towel procedure. All educators have been informed of the revised practice and its importance in preventing cross-contamination. Daily room checks and management monitoring will ensure an adequate supply of clean hand towels is maintained and that the single-use procedure is consistently followed.

5. On the day of the inspection, all bins in the Montessori and Toddler rooms that were not foot pedal operated were immediately replaced with appropriate foot pedal bins. This ensures that children are not required to touch bin lids by hand, reducing the risk of cross-contamination.

Regular monitoring will ensure that appropriate foot pedal bins remain in place throughout the service. Should any bin become damaged or no longer function correctly, it will be replaced promptly with an appropriate foot pedal operated bin.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Garda Vetting
- Trampoline Policy

Photographic evidence of the following:

- A sign on the trampoline stating "Please permit only one child at a time on the trampoline"
- Electrical cables secured.

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- Single use hand towel system, visual hand washing poster.
- Pedal operated bins.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances. The response received has been reviewed and accepted. While it is the position of the Inspectorate that trampolines are not suitable for use in an early years service, it is acknowledged that the registered provider has implemented a number of safety controls to reduce the risk to children.

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 had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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.

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Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 22/05/2026.
- (b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment on the premises. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 19/06/2025. The firefighting equipment was last serviced in 18/06/2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises

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 that the service was adequately insured for 75 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2026 to the 27/03/2027.