

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016GY016		
Name of Service:	Bubbles Montessori		
Address of Service:	No: 18 Leargan, Western Distributor Road, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway		
Eircode:	H91 TR98		
Name of Registered Provider:	Fiona O'Donohue		
Service type:	Full Day Care		
Date of Inspection:	26/08/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM 14
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.		
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel and 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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Bubbles Montessori is a private service which operates a full day care service, catering for children attending on a part time and sessional basis. While registered to accommodate children from 0 months to 6 years children currently attending are aged from 2 to 6 years of age. This includes children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is facilitated over 38 weeks annually. Daily opening hours Monday to Thursday are from 07.30 to 18:00 and on Friday only from 07:30 to 17:00. The service operates approximately 50 weeks of the year.

This two-storey building is located in a housing development in Knocknacarra, a suburb of Galway city. There are two environments namely; Upstairs Montessori and Downstairs Montessori. A kitchen is available on the ground floor where meals and snacks are stored, prepared and heated. The outdoor play area is directly accessible from the rear from the Downstairs Montessori environment.

Staffing

There are eight adults employed in the service including the registered provider.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, 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—the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required

(a) 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

(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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A designated person in charge had been assigned to the service and a named person was available to deputise.
- (b) The staff roster confirmed that either the designated person in charge or the deputy were in the service during operating hours. On arrival the registered provider was onsite for a brief period of time.
- (2) Following a review of the staff roster and in discussion with the designated person in charge it was established that three new adults had commenced employment since the last inspection on 05 November 2024. Therefore, these three files were reviewed along with Garda vetting for three existing adults who required renewal.
- (a) Four of the required six written and validated references were from previous employers.
- (b) The remaining two of six written and validated references were from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the three adults employed since the last inspection. In addition, three garda vetting disclosures, which required renewal, for three existing staff members were also on file demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Overseas police vetting was available for two adults for whom they were required as they had spent six months or more, as adults, outside the State.
- (4) Staff recruitment files reviewed for the three new adults employed to work directly with the children indicated that they had obtained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum of Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Non-Compliance Information

(7) (a)

Contrary to the service's behaviour management policy, which indicated that staff are asked to sign that they have read and agreed to implement the policies and procedures, when asked the designated person in charge stated that there were no written records of staff signatures available for the behaviour management policy. This poses a risk that staff have not read the relevant policies and procedures as requested during induction and are not aware of the strategies to be used to manage the different levels of difficulties in regard to children's behaviour. It was acknowledged that on 01 September 2026 an email was received from the designated person in charge which evidenced that all staff had signed to state that they had read the behaviour management policy.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

All staff have signed to say they have read the behaviour management policy and management will ensure that all policies are signed off at induction.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the staff signatures in relation to staff reading, understanding and agreeing to implement the behaviour management policy was received in the office of the inspectorate on 01/09/2026.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies and procedures were reviewed and were found to contain the required information;

- Supervision
- Outdoor Play
- Settling In
- Multimedia

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were met. There were 16 children in attendance with 6 adults in the morning and 14 children in attendance with 5 adults in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were two adults on the premises while the early years children were present. The staff roster and a conversation with the adults in the service evidenced that there were two adults on the premises while the early years children were present in the service.

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;

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of all employees was available from the staff recruitment files.
- (i) Staff rosters from the week of 22 August and 27 July 2026 were reviewed and these were found to contain the relevant details including;
- Adults on duty while the service was in operation including at least one person trained as a First Aid Responder (FAR)
 - The designated person in charge and the deputy person in charge in the absence of the person in charge
 - Persons not included in the adult/child ratios
 - Records the actual start and finish times of each person in attendance each day

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(k) Two of five accident/incident/injury records reviewed contained the required information.

(3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) (a), (i) and (k) were open to inspection on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(k) Three of five accident/incident/injury reports were reviewed and were missing information; one child's record was missing both a parent and a managers signature and two children's records were both missing manager's signatures. This poses the risk that the parent/manager were not aware of the accident/incident/injury which may impact the care of the child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (k) All signatures have been recorded appropriately for the manager and the parents on the three children's accident/incident/injury forms. Staff have reviewed the accident/injury policy and are aware of the requirement to ensure that the form is signed by management before being sent to the parents. In the event of a serious accident management will phone the parent straight away and follow up with the report form.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) (k) Copies of the manager and parent signatures for the three children's records were received in the office of the inspectorate on 01/09/2026. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 16 (1) (k).

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

Basic needs:

- In line with the service's healthy eating policy food is stored, prepared and heated in the service and snacks were provided at regular intervals throughout the day.
- The hot meal of the day, pasta marinara and garlic bread, was observed being served in the Upstairs Montessori at 12:20. The designated person in charge stated that breakfast of wheat and oat-based cereals and toast was available from 07:30 until 08:00.
- Children had access to age and stage appropriate cutlery and crockery.
- Water and milk were both available in the Upstairs Montessori and children were observed pouring these into cups and glasses, promoting choice and independence.
- Children in the Upstairs Montessori environment were escorted to the toilets. An adult was available to remind children to wash their hands after toileting.
- Wash hand basins in use by the adults and children were fitted with dispensing soap, dispensing paper towels and pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste in each area.
- Spare clothes were available and in use for children who had accidents ensuring they were kept comfortable and dry.
- Tablets were in use in the service in line with the service's multimedia policy. These were used by the adults to enhance the children's learning suitable to the children's age and stage of development. In addition, they are also used to record activities that the children carryout on a daily basis. The staff member in the Upstairs Montessori environment stated that they are used to enrich the curriculum in relation to the themes the children are working on throughout the year. An example included the 3-minute meditation which the children chose to listen to after lunch.
- Rest/quiet areas were visible in each environment which were furnished with a variety of soft furnishings including bean bags, vinyl cushions, vinyl sofas and colourful emotion and number mats on the floor These areas were located away from noisy activities.

Supporting children's relationships:

- Adults in the Downstairs Montessori environment were observed working closely together to reassure a child settling in of a parent's return. Subsequently, when the child became increasingly distressed the adults contacted the parents/guardians to pick the child up. In conversation, the adults in the environment stated that the child was settling in for 1 hour a day on their first week in line with the service's settling in policy.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- The adult in the Upstairs Montessori environment encouraged the children at mealtimes with self-help skills which included the use of drinking utensils. Accidental spillages were treated as a learning experience and the adult was supportive and aided skill building by assisting the child with cleaning up.

Non-Compliance Information

19(1)(b)

At 10:21 unsuitable care practices were observed by the inspectors and the dignity and privacy of the children was not respected in the downstairs sanitary area. An adult was observed changing a child on the floor of the sanitary area, whilst another child was using the toilet in the same cubicle, in full view of passing adults and children. It was acknowledged that the designated person in charge submitted the signatures of the staff on 01 September 2026 to evidence that the adults in the service had read the supervision of toileting policy.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

- (1) (b) Staff have signed to state that they have read, understood and agree to implement the supervision of children at toileting policy particularly respecting the privacy and dignity of the children at these times.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documentation was received in the office of the inspectorate;

- (1) (b) Copies of the supervision of children at toileting policy was received along with signatures of staff to evidence that they have read, understood and have agreed to implement the supervision of children while toileting policy.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 (1) (b).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 main entrance door was secured on arrival and was operated by a buzzer preventing unauthorised adults from entering the building. A camera security system was in operation whereby the adult in the service could see who was at the door when the buzzer was pressed.
- The stairwell was well lit from both artificial and natural lighting ensuring the children could see where they were stepping. Handrails were accessible on both sides ensuring children could navigate the stairs safely.
- Windows in both the upstairs and downstairs environments were fitted with restrictors ensuring that the children could not fall or exit from them.
- Finger shields were visible on doors to protect children from trapping their fingers.
- Toys and play equipment in both the indoor and outdoor areas were observed to be in good condition and well maintained.
- Fire exit doors were unobstructed ensuring the safe evacuation of the children and adults in the event of an emergency.
- The perimeter of the outdoor area was secured with a high wall and a secured coded gate to ensure that unauthorised adults could not enter the area and that the children could not leave the area unsupervised.

Safe Sleep:

- Stackable beds were available and in use for 3 children over 2 years of age in the downstairs Montessori environment.
- The service kept physical sleep checks on the service digital application on the tablet. Records for sleeping children included the 10-minute physical sleep checks carried out for each child with details such as the room temperature, position, colour and breathing of each child.
- The sleep room temperature was maintained between 18 °C and 22 °C, when children were sleeping on stackable beds.
- The stackable beds were placed 50 centimetres apart to ensure the safety of the children.
- Ambient light was available for the adults to view the children while asleep or resting.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) Certificates were available to evidence that two adults had first aid responder for children (FAR) training completed. The staff roster evidenced that at least one adult was available while the early years children were on the premises.
- (2) (a)(b) The suitably equipped first aid box was stored in the kitchen, within easy access of the adults. It was available while the early years children were present in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

- The designated person in charge and the adults ensured that the early years children were adequately supervised in the indoor and outdoor environments.
- The adult/child ratio was maintained in each Montessori environment and in the outdoor play area. This was evidenced by the staff roster and observations of the inspectors in these areas on the day.
- Each child attending the service was under supervision of a qualified adult at all times during the day. Examples included the adult in the Upstairs Montessori environment intervening when two children were misusing scissors while carrying out a fine skills activity and the adult in the outdoor play area supervising the children while they were sliding on the physical apparatus in the area.
- It was observed on the day that the staff ensured that children were supervised during sleep, mealtimes, in the environments, and while playing in the outdoor play area. The adults were also observed to supervise children by sound and by sight.