

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL056		
Name of Service:	Kid Kare Crèche & Montessori Pre-school		
Address of Service:	Tawnalarry, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal		
Eircode:	F94 A895		
Name of Registered Provider:	Sharon Graham-Porter		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	10/04/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM 59
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen K. Folan N. Toner		
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).			
Conditions if applicable	Non-Applicable		

Description of service

Kid Kare Crèche and Montessori preschool is a privately owned and operated early years' service located in a rural setting on the outskirts of Donegal Town. The service is registered to provide full day, part-time and sessional care to children aged 0 - 6 years and operates from 8.00am-6.00pm each weekday. The service is also registered to provide school age care. The service operates from three separate buildings which are located adjacently on the pre-school site. There are eight care rooms in total across the three buildings. There are four playrooms provided in the two-storey building to the front of the site. The Little Discoverer's and Little Adventurer's rooms are located on the ground floor in this building. Children's sanitary facilities and sleeping accommodation are located adjacent to both ground-floor rooms. A staff room, a kitchen where meals for children are prepared and ancillary storage areas are also located on the ground floor. The Montessori Sun and Montessori Moon rooms are located on the first floor of this building. A single storey building situated towards the rear of the pre-school site includes two additional playrooms, namely the Little Explorer's and Montessori Star rooms. The Montessori Star room is served by adjacent children's toilets. Nappy-changing facilities and a designated sleep room are available just off the Little Explorer's room. Other facilities provided in this building include an office and staff sanitary facilities. A further single storey building to the right of the two main buildings houses the Earth room which is used as a sessional pre-school in the mornings and a school age service in the afternoons. A large awning shelters an outdoor play area utilised by children in this room daily. The service has recently added an additional outdoor preschool session in this area known as 'Sky'. There are two sheltered areas and sanitary accommodation for children in this area.

Staffing

A total of 36 staff members were employed in the service at the time of inspection. On the day of the inspection 25 adults were present, 14 adults were working directly with the preschool children, 2 adults were working in the kitchen, 2 adults were employed as office administrators, and 2 as maintenance personnel. There were two students on placement. Two adults were working with school age children. The registered provider was present and available to provide support when required.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,23,25,26 and 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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-

- (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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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) The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2) A total of 38 staff files including two students were reviewed. The following vetting information was available:

- (a) Fifty-eight written validated references from past employers.

- (b) Eighteen written validated references from reputable sources.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for ten adults, who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.
- (4) Thirty-two of the adult's files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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)
- There was an adequate number of adults caring for the children throughout the inspection. When the inspector's arrived at the service, 63 children were being cared for by 16 staff members in six care rooms.
- (2)
- In the Little Discoverers (baby) room 3 staff members were caring for 9 children aged 1.1-1.6 years.
 - In the Little Adventurers (toddler) room, 3 staff members were caring for 16 children aged 2-3 years.
 - In the Montessori Sunroom, 3 staff members were caring for 9 children aged 3-5 years.
 - In the Montessori Moon room, 1 staff member were caring for 6 children aged 3-5 years.
 - In the Little Explorers (wobbler) room, 4 staff members were caring for 10 children aged 1-2 years.
 - In the Montessori Star room, 2 staff members were caring for 13 children aged 3-5 years.

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.

Compliance Information

19 (a) (b)

The service promoted healthy eating and food, and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. A three-week menu plan was available for review on the notice board. Children on the day of inspection were observed eating fish fingers, waffles, corn, strawberries, and yogurts. On discussion with staff, an alternative was available if a child did not eat what was on the menu. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriately to their age and stage of development. Appropriate child-sized tables and chairs were available, while babies were observed in highchairs. Dinner time was not rushed, and staff members were observed speaking and singing with the children, using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction.

Children's drinks were available in all the care rooms within their reach throughout the day. Babies were observed being fed their bottles of pre-made milk in adult-size chairs in the baby rooms. Nappy changing was carried out regularly and promptly as required; staff were observed handling the changes in a positive and sensitive manner, singing and speaking to children to provide warm one-to-one interaction. Children were also observed using the toilet independently, with adults available to support if required. Bibs and aprons were available for messy play activities, and spare clothes were provided if children required a change during the day. On the day of inspection, it was cold and wet; children were observed utilising the outdoor area with wet gear, hats, gloves, and wellies.

The service has two dedicated sleep rooms to meet the individual sleep needs of younger children. For children who did not require a sleep, appropriate quiet rest facilities and activities were available in alternative care rooms so as not to disturb those sleeping. Inside the care rooms, staff in the baby and toddler rooms were positioned on the floor, allowing children to safely lie, roll, creep, crawl, and learn to walk with soft padding mats available for safety. There was ample room in the large playrooms for children to move freely and engage in both individual and group play.

The indoor environments are thoughtfully designed to promote and develop independence. Fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, shape sorters, crayons, and paper, while the pre-school rooms featured a range of play-based materials positioned on open shelving to nurture curiosity. Interest areas were spacious and uncluttered, such as the toddler room which included a role-play kitchen with pots, pans, and play food. Children's artwork was displayed on the walls, and a range of books in the reading area supported language development.

The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. Staff demonstrated warmth and sensitivity, communicating with babies using soft tones and offering reassurance. When challenges arose, such as a child wanting a bike held by another, staff were observed getting down to eye level to support children in finding positive solutions. A health-promoting ethos was implemented to support emotional well-being; staff encouraged children to express their feelings, and age-appropriate books were used to help them recognise and manage their emotions. Many children demonstrated a sense of pride in their success, calling on staff to share achievements.

A key-worker system was in place with named staff members assigned responsibility for creating close relationships with a designated group of children and their parents. This ensured parents were given daily information on food intake, sleep, and personal care needs. Individual inclusion plans were implemented in line with each child's needs, detailing their developmental stage and necessary interventions. Ongoing observations and assessments informed a flexible curriculum based on emerging interests. On the day of inspection, children were facilitated to make their own choices in activities, and many were observed working collaboratively and sharing unprompted.

Gross motor development was supported with ride-on toys, climbing equipment, and an area to play ball outside. There was easy access to the outside area throughout the day, and children were observed playing outside on the day of inspection. Children in the care rooms were observed in energetic play with staff both inside the care rooms and outdoors. Transitions between rooms and activities were managed sensitively in the service, with staff observed using a variety of strategies such as visual cues, songs and verbal prompts to prepare children for the end of one activity and the start of another.

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:

- All entry points to the service were secured with a bell system alerting staff to the arrival of parents or visitors. Each of the outdoor play areas were enclosed with boundary fencing preventing the unsupervised exit of a preschool child.
- The premises, toys, and play equipment appeared to be maintained in good repair and were appropriate for the age group of children using them.
- Window cord blinds were appropriately secured. Cables for electrical appliances were appropriately secured to prevent the risk of accident or injury to children.
- Highchairs within the baby room were fitted with a 5-point safety harness and were in good state of repair.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables and highchairs were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in both care rooms.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- Aprons and gloves were available and observed in use by staff when changing of a child was required.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by mechanical ventilation and openable windows.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.

Administration of Medication:

- When interviewed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. Detailed care plans were in place for children who required them. The plans detailed the process to follow for staff to administer emergency medication and reviewed by parents and management. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had three designated sleep rooms with appropriate costs available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.
- The Sleep room temperature was recorded, within the acceptable on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) The plastic cover on a steering wheel in the outdoor play area was cracked and broken posing a risk of injury.
- (2) The door to the staff room which was used to store medication, staff belongings and hazardous kitchen equipment was unsecured when checked by the inspectors.
- (3) A single use trampoline was observed in the outdoor area. Trampolines are prohibited for the use in the few schools.
- (4) There were no restrictive opening devices on the windows in the little explorer's room.

Infection Control:

- (5) In the little explorer's room, children's handwashing was not carried out as required immediately after snack time.

Fire Safety:

- (6) A cot was positioned in front of the emergency exit route in the sleep room off the little explorer's sleep room and preventing safe evacuation in the event of a fire.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The toy Car has been removed from Little Explorer's playground. If we install a similar car in future, it will be checked for damage regularly.
2. Staff have been advised to keep the staff room door closed. This was addressed at a staff meeting. Child locks have been placed on the cabinets and a fridge lock has been installed in case the staff door is left open again. Staff in Little Explorers will advise if one of the child locks is broken and needs replacing. Spot checks will be carried out to ensure staff door is being kept closed.
3. Trampoline has been removed. Trampolines will no longer be used in the service unless for therapeutic needs, and with a letter stating such from an authorised specialist. Staff have been informed of this in a staff meeting.
4. Restrictive window locks have been installed. Staff in Little Explorers will advise if a window lock needs replacing. Spot checks will be carried out to ensure restrictive locks are being used.

Infection Control:

5. All staff were advised about necessary handwashing after meals during a staff meeting. Spot checks will be carried out around snack times.

Fire Safety:

6. A cot has been removed and there is nothing in front of the fire exit. We will ensure that a maximum of 11 cots in the Explorers sleep room to ensure that there is no cots blocking the fire exit. Spot checks will be carried out to make sure cots are far enough away from the fire exit.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographs of playground with car removed submitted.
2. Photo of fridge lock, Photos of cabinet locks, Staff meeting minutes submitted
3. Trampoline was removed on the day of inspection, Staff meeting minutes submitted.
4. Photographic evidence of window restrictors installed.

Infection Control:

5. Staff meeting minutes submitted.

Fire Safety:

6. Photographic evidence of unobstructed fire exit.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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 registered provider ensured a person trained in first aid for children was always available to the children attending the preschool service 19 adults had up to date certification of first aid for children.

(2) (a)(b)

First aid boxes are available in all the care rooms which are stocked sufficiently for the number of preschool children attending the service.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 02 April 2026.
 - (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was dated 04 March 2026. The records for the smoke detection system indicated the last service occurred in 04 March 2026.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) was available and open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (4) On the day of inspection, a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were observed to be displayed in a conspicuous place within the premises.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure. There were no visible defects present externally.
- (b) On arrival to the service the door was found to be secure. There was a keypad and buzzer system present to alert staff to visitors, ensuring that no unauthorised access or unsupervised exit could occur. The perimeter of the outdoor area consisted wooden fencing.
- (c) Windows were large and openable. Natural light and ventilation could be provided naturally.
- (e) There were sufficient toilets, nappy changing units and wash hand basins available to the children on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

29 (d)

The registered provider failed to ensure a consistent supply of water to the sunroom sanitary area. At 11:05 am, no warm water was available from either of the two washbasins in the children's sanitary area due to inconsistent water pressure. This resulted in an inability to maintain effective hand hygiene and posed a risk to infection control.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. A new regulator has been installed for the sun room pipes. This will rectify the water pressure issue. Staff have been advised to contact the office if the water pressure issue returns.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Invoice from plumber for works carried out. Minutes of team meeting where water pressure was discussed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 has been adequately addressed.