

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR074
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Name of Service:	Ashgrove Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	61 Lower Churchtown Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Andrea Byrne
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	25/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Quigley & J. Mayock
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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

Not applicable

Description of service

Ashgrove Crèche & Montessori is a full day care service which is located in an urban, residential area of Churchtown, South County Dublin. Care and education are provided to children aged between one and six years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 07:45 and 18:00 hours. The service is a purposely adapted, single storey residential property and comprises of four care rooms. A fifth care room is provided on the grounds of the service in a purpose-built log cabin. The children have access to an outdoor play area to the front of the premises with artificial grass surfacing which is divided into two separate play spaces.

Staffing

The service currently employs 14 staff members including the registered provider and a cook. There were 12 adults present on the day of inspection including 10 childcare and education staff members, a cook, and the registered provider who remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15. As a result, the scope of the inspection included a sample record from each care room.

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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the 25 of November 2024 following the inspection in respect of Regulation 9(2)(c), Garda Vetting. An adult employed had been working directly with the children in the service since the 4 November 2024 and a Garda Vetting disclosure had not been obtained for the adult. A response was received from the service on the 26 November 2024 which sufficiently mitigated the risk identified.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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

(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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

(2) A sample of documentation was reviewed in respect of nine adults who had commenced working in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on the 27 October 2022. Regulation 9 (2)(c) was assessed for each of the fourteen adults working in the service.

The following records were available for the nine adults:

(a) Twelve of the written validated references provided were from previous employers.

(b) Two of the written validated references were from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for thirteen adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years in relation to one staff member. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(4) There was evidence that seven of the staff members had attained at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and education at level 5 on the National Framework for Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) (b)
 - There were no references available for two adults employed to work in the service.
 - (c) A Garda Vetting disclosure was not available for one adult working in the service. Through discussion with the registered provider and a review of staff sign in records, it was confirmed the staff member had commenced employment on the 4 November 2024. An immediate action notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on the 25 November 2024.
 - (d) International police vetting was not available for one adult who resided outside of the country for more than six consecutive months.
- (3) A review of documentation evidenced the registered provider had not taken the required steps as outlined in Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) to ensure that new recruits were suitable and competent before allowing them access to children, as detailed above.
- (4) Evidence of a childcare qualification was not provided for two adults who worked directly with the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a)(b) References for both employees are now in the files and were validated by phone.
 - (c) This staff member did not work in the service again until vetting was submitted and arrived.
 - (d) International vetting has been obtained and put on file for this staff member.
 - (3) Management will from now on follow a checklist for induction of new staff before any new staff members join the service.
 - (4) Staff member 1 with no cert will not be working at the service until the cert/transcript of results is available this is expected by mid-January 2025. Staff member 2 with no cert is awaiting a replacement cert from QQI this takes 10 days and the service received notification on 12th Dec that it would be a bit more time with the Christmas break so the service should have it early In January and will send immediately upon receipt.

Management will follow the induction checklist and obtain all documents before any new staff member join the service in the future and this will be included in the job offer letters from now on.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider will address the non-compliances.

These actions will be reviewed on the next inspection of the service. The regulatory requirement has been met.

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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children throughout the inspection. There were ten staff members allocated to work directly with thirty-three children.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement was maintained in accordance with the ages and type of service delivered.

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.*

Compliance Information

A sample of documentation was reviewed for 12 of the children currently enrolled to attend the service by the inspector. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to points (a) to (i) of the above regulation for each of the records reviewed.

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-
- (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

(1)(b)

Appropriate and suitable care practices were observed to be in place. Meals and snacks were offered to the children regularly throughout the day. Drinks of water were available within the rooms and were offered regularly, milk was offered when children were eating at mealtimes. Self-feeding was promoted in younger care rooms and staff assisted children where required. The staff supported the children in managing their personal care. Children's nappies were changed routinely and as needed, with staff using these opportunities for warm one-to-one interactions. Staff addressed children by name and spoke to them in gentle positive tones. Children were comforted promptly if they became upset.

Staff were observed to promote a language rich environment, prompting discussions with children about their activities and outside lives. The younger age groups learning was child led and staff were attentive to their cues for interactions and social play. The children were observed to go outside for a period of time in the morning and afternoon and were dressed appropriately for the weather in coats and hats.

An area with matting and cushions was provided within the rooms where the children could rest or take a break from activities. Younger children were provided with the opportunity to sleep at a designated time. Staff reported that children could be accommodated to sleep outside this time if they displayed signs of tiredness.

The children were made comfortable for sleep, with staff removing their shoes and outer clothing and providing soothers to those who used them. The environments were calm and conducive to sleep, with staff sitting with the children and soothing them as needed. Staff in the older care rooms communicated with parents through an online application on individual phones in each care room. In the younger age group, a record was kept for staff to communicate with parents/guardians regarding individual children's care, including information about diet, sleep, and nappy changes.

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 entrance gate to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service. Hand sanitisers, hazardous materials and medications were stored safely out of reach of children. The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order.

Infection Control:

An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The service maintained a cleaning schedule and the environments were clean. Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing.

Administration of Medication:

Medications were stored in their original packaging out of reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were observed to check the children sleeping physically and documented their position and breathing every ten minutes. When questioned, staff were familiar with the safe sleep guidelines. Standard cots and low-level beds were available for children to sleep in line with their age and stages of development

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There were loose electrical cables trailing in reach of the children in the playschool and senior Montessori rooms which posed a risk of harm to the children.
2. The window in the senior Montessori children's toilets did not have a restrictor engaged on it. Children accessed this bathroom alone and the window was easily accessible to a child, posing a risk of a child exiting the room unsupervised.
3. The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. One staff member working in the service did not have a Garda Vetting disclosure which was dated within the last 3 years.

Infection Control:

4. Some of the nappy changing practices observed on the day of inspection were inadequate for infection control purposes and at variance with the policy and associated procedures in place as follows;
 - One staff member was observed to change five children's nappies with no handwashing between changes. The staff member was then observed to assist with feeding younger children at dinner time with no handwashing beforehand.
 - Children's clothes were put on with the same glove used to change and discard of soiled nappies.
5. A microwave was used to heat younger children's bottles of milk brought in from home. This Poses a risk of harm to a child from potential hot spots forming in the milk.
6. There were no handwashing procedures in place in the toddler and playschool rooms before mealtimes, posing a risk of cross contamination. This was at variance with the handwashing and infection control policy in place in the service.
7. The children's belongings in the senior Montessori room were stored in the staff toilets. This poses a risk of cross contamination.
8. There was no system in place in the younger age groups for sterilisation of mouthed toys which posed a risk of cross contamination. Children were observed to repeatedly mouth toys in view of staff members which were then subsequently mouthed by other children. This was at variance with the infection control policy in place in the service.

Administration of Medication:

Some of the records available for the administration of prescribed medications to children were incomplete and did not contain the required details to ensure safe administration to a child as follows;

9. There was no documented pre-consent recorded for the administration of some medications to children posing a potential risk of the incorrect dosage being administered to a child.
10. Some of the records contained only the name of the medication given to a child. Details of the child, the required dose, and the required frequency of the medication was not recorded.
11. Some staff members demonstrated during discussions with the inspector that they were unaware of the requirement for parents to document details of prescribed medications and pre-consent, prior to staff members administering the medications. This is at variance with the medication administration policy in place in the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All cables have been secured or removed from the children's reach. Cables to be checked as part of the daily checklist in the rooms
2. The staff in the Snr Montessori have been shown how to use the restrictors on these windows properly and it will be this way going forward. Windows to be checked as part of the daily checklist in the rooms.
3. Renewal Garda vetting for one staff member was over 3 years and has now been applied for awaiting the cert and this person is no longer working in the service and has retired but will be re vetted in the event the are helping out from time to time as was the case on the day of the inspection. Monthly checks of vetting renewal dates will be completed.

Infection Control:

4. The nappy changing policy has been reiterated to the staff members in playschool and toddlers and all other rooms. A new checklist showing the steps in the policy is now on display in the nappy changing areas and each person had been given training by our supervisor in using this checklist to ensure the nappy changes reflect the policy displayed. Nappy training will be part of the induction checklist
5. As per the service policy document children over 12 months will no longer be allowed bottles within the creche. Milk will now be served at room temperature in a sippy cup or beaker to these children. This has been communicated to the parents of the 5 new toddlers who had been using bottles. Microwaves will no longer be used and there is no need for a bottle warmer as there will be no bottles used.
6. Hand washing routines have been revisited with the staff in Toddler room who wash hands within the room and Playschool who will go to the changing room to wash hands from now on. Induction training around handwashing for new staff members and reminders for all.
7. All children's belongings have been removed from the staff toilet. Room to be kept clear at all times management will monitor this.
8. The containers for cleaning of mouthed toys have been put back into the toddler and playschool rooms and the staff have been reminded of the process for this as per the infection control policy. Management will continue to ensure the mouthed toys are being cleaned properly.

Administration of Medication:

9. Training has been given to all staff around proper use of the medicine administration book
10. Training has been given to all staff about the importance of the correct filling in of this book
11. Again, all staff members have been fully briefed on how administrations of medications should be handled going forward.
Management will regularly check the medicine administration books to ensure they are being filled in properly going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider will address the non-compliances. These actions will be assessed on the next inspection of the service. The regulatory requirement has been met.

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)
An adult trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available to the children during the inspection.
- (2)
(a)(b)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were observed to be immediately accessible to the children within the service and were stored in a conspicuous location on the day of inspection.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill had taken place in October 2024.
 - (b) There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system had been serviced within the required timeframe.
- (4) procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in conspicuous locations within each room in the service.