

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015DS012 |
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| Name of Service: | Chuckleberries Montessori & Creche |
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| Address of Service: | 1 Dalriada Hall, Dalriada Court, Knocklyon, Dublin 16 |
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| Eircode: | D16 E029 |
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| Name of Registered Provider: | Barbara Thornberry |
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| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time |
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| Date of Inspection: | 15/10/2025 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 50 | PM | 51 |
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| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate Area 1 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K |
| Inspection undertaken by: | T. Nelson and C. Kerrigan |
| 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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| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable. |
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Description of service

Chuckleberries Montessori and Creche is a full day care service located in a residential area of Dublin 16 and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 75 children aged 0 to 6 years. The service currently operates 7.15am to 6.00pm Monday to Thursday and 7.15am to 4.30pm on Fridays. The service is one of two services operated locally by the registered provider.

Chuckleberries Montessori and Creche operates from a purpose-built premises on the ground floor of a residential building with six care rooms to include the Tweeny Room (12 to 18 months old), Wobbler Room (1 to 2 years old), Toddler Room (1 to 2 years old), Playschool Room (2 to 2.5 years old), Pre Montessori (2 to 3 years old) and Montessori (3 to 4 years). Other facilities include nappy changing and sanitary facilities located off the rooms, a cot room, staff room, kitchen and office. There is an enclosed outdoor area located to the rear of the building.

Staffing

There are currently 20 staff employed by the registered provider including the person in charge and deputy person in charge, two kitchen staff and 16 staff who work directly with the children including three staff who provide support across the rooms. The registered provider manages the oversight of the two services. There were 20 adults present on the day of the inspection including the registered provider, one kitchen staff member, the person in charge and deputy person in charge and 15 staff who work with the children. An adult facilitating an activity was also present for a time on the morning 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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following:

- Regulation 16(1)(j)(k) – Record in relation to Preschool Service
- Regulation 19 (1)(a)-Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler, Toddler, Playschool and Pre-Montessori rooms and did not include the Tweeny and Montessori rooms. Regulation 11 was inspected across all rooms.

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.

(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

(1) The registered provider ensured that:

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A review of the roster showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was clearly detailed in the staff roles and responsibilities which were signed off by staff and retained in the staff files.

(2) The staff roster was reviewed and discussed with the service manager and the files of 14 staff who were new to the service since the last inspection on the 6 March 2024 along with the file of the adult facilitating an activity. The Garda Vetting disclosures for 2 staff members whose files were reviewed on the last inspection were also reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

- (a) Twenty-three validated written references were available from recent past employers.
- (b) Seven validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 17 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Eleven adults who had lived in a state other than Ireland for six months or more as an adult had international police vetting from that state available for inspection.

(3) Documentary evidence available showed that all of the checks outlined in (2) had been carried out prior to any of the adults having contact with the children in the service.

(4) The 13 staff who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality

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

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults available to the children attending the service to meet their care needs.
 - There were 14 staff available to work directly with the 50 children present on the morning of the inspection and the 51 children present on the afternoon.
 - The person in charge and deputy person in charge were available to provide support when needed.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were maintained correctly throughout the inspection. For example:
 - Three cover staff and the management team were available to provide cover for breaks.
 - Staff reported they were aware of the required ratios for the age range of children in the rooms, this was facilitated by a colour coded attendance sheet which highlighted the age range and required ratio in the care rooms.

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:

- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured the following:

- (j) Following a review of a sample of ten records, the registered provider ensured a full record in writing was maintained for the administration of medication.
- (k) Following a review of a sample of ten records, the registered provider ensured a full record in writing was maintained for accident and incidents.

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 registered provider facilitated the wellbeing of children through the provision of the following appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment:

Basic Needs

- Drinks of water were available in the care rooms throughout the day, and a choice of milk or water was provided at mealtimes.
- Children were observed to have regular meals provided, with fruit and yogurts available as a mid-morning snack and a hot meal of chicken casserole with vegetables and mashed potato for dinner on the day of the inspection.
- Transitions were managed and supported to be a smooth and calm experience for the children. For example:
 - Clear indications signalling transitions were used, such as verbal direction to tidy up ahead of snack time, and staff planned in advance; such as when an additional member of staff prepared the room for sleep during dinner time.
 - There was documentary evidence that a plan was in place for a child due to move to a new room. Staff in the new room were aware of the child and of the plan. This consideration and planning assists in smooth, comfortable transitions for children.
- Children were observed to have the opportunity to move freely through their care room and independently access play experiences of their choice.
- Children were tended to immediately for nappy changing, toileting and nose cleaning.

Supporting Relationships

- Staff were observed to interact with the children in a warm, engaging manner. They showed an interest in their activities by asking questions, taking part in their play, provided hugs when a child was observed to seek out physical contact, gave positive feedback and used terms of endearment.

- Children’s behaviour was managed using positive age-appropriate strategies such as intervening immediately when minor incidents arose, stating clear expected boundaries, and offering comfort when needed.

Physical and Material Environment

- The toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving, visible and accessible to the children, and were grouped in themed areas of interest such as home area, mark making, construction, and library areas. Themed areas of interest facilitate children to have a more focused engagement in their play experiences.
- Toys and equipment including books were observed to be in good condition, and suitable for the age and stage of the children in the care rooms.
- Labelling and imagery were used to indicate where things go, which can facilitate comfort and familiarity.

Programme of Activities

- There was a routine displayed in the care rooms, and this was reflected in the practice on the day. Staff were familiar with the routine and communicated their plan as to what will happen next effectively.
- Medium- and short-term plans were displayed in the rooms, and this was reflected in the day’s activities and in the products of artwork displayed on the walls.
- Activities were planned and timed to suit the age range and interests of the children in the rooms, with alternative activities planned for those who did not wish to participate.

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

The following measures were observed to safeguard children:

General Safety:

- The entrance to the service was secured by a magnetic lock which was managed by staff, with the door release switch out of reach of children. This restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- Internal door handles were up high out of reach, with gates secured on the doorways, this restricted children's unsupervised movement within the premises.
- Blind cords were secured safely.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed, and an up-to-date risk assessment was completed.

Infection Control:

- The premises were in a clean and hygienic condition and documented up to date cleaning records were available and displayed in the premises.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use hand towels were available at all wash hand basins used by the children and the staff members.
- Children's soothers were stored in individual labelled, lidded containers.
- Children's bedding was stored individually in their cubbies.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff were aware of the administration of medication for a child who required a specific type of medication, and there was a documented care plan available.
- Medication was stored appropriately, out of reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

- There was a daily sleep risk checklist displayed in the care room which was up to date.
- Staff were observed to check the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children every ten minutes and a log of this was maintained.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Procedures detailing the evacuation route were displayed throughout the premises.
- The details of the attendance of the children were accurately recorded in the attendance book.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The join in the flooring in the Pre-Montessori room was not sealed leaving a gap which could not be adequately cleaned and there was a build-up of dirt and debris. This posed a potential risk of contamination.

Safe Sleep:

Sleep practices were not in line with Tusla's current "*Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months*" and the service policy on safe sleep. The following practices were observed:

2. Children under 2 years old were not provided with appropriate sleep facilities. Some children were observed to sleep on low level beds with a mattress depth of 2cm, others were observed to sleep on the low-level bed without a mattress. A mattress with a minimum 6cms depth is required for children under the age of 2 years to ensure their comfort.
3. There were no documented sleep plans available with parental permission for children under 2 years old who moved from a cot to a floor bed. A sleep plan incorporating consideration that a child is developmentally ready should be completed before moving a child from a cot to a floor bed.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The floor was cleaned, and the gap was sealed with tape until the flooring is replaced. The registered provider will ensure areas requiring maintenance are fixed immediately.

Safe Sleep:

2. The service confirmed they have an adequate supply of suitable cots, and they will ensure that these will be used for children under the age of 2 years.
3. Children under the age of 2 years will no longer sleep on low beds and will sleep in cots.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1. Photographic and documentary evidence.

Safe Sleep:

2. No evidence submitted.
3. No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed and will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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 provided evidence that a person trained in First Aid Responder training was always available to the children attending the pre-school.

(2) The registered provider ensured that:

(a) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in the care rooms and in the hallway and there were signs displayed indicating this.

(b) The first aid box was easily accessible and readily available.