

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY053
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Name of Service:	Cocoon Childcare Santry
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Address of Service:	Block F Milner Square, Shanowen Road, Santry, Dublin 9.
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nicola Battams
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	29/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	65
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	C Kerrigan and T Nelson
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Cocoon Childcare Santry is a privately operated full day care service; one of 15 services operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to provide service full day care, part-time and sessional childcare to a maximum of 94 children aged 0-6 years. The service is comprised of six care rooms, a kitchen, office and a staff and operates from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm from Monday to Friday from the ground floor of an apartment complex. The service also participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9am-12pm daily. An enclosed outdoor area is available to the rear of the service

Staffing

The registered provider employs 24 staff including an operations manager who attends the service regularly.

On the day of inspection 22 adults were present within the service. On arrival to the service there was one service manager, two assistant managers, 15 Early years practitioners, a cook and a cleaner present in the service. The operations manager arrived shortly after the inspectors and provided support within the care rooms. A student was also working in a supernumerary capacity within the service.

Another operations manager who is not employed to work within this service arrived after the inspectors and remained for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider does not work within the service.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

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 the following.

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3)(4). Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11 (1)(2)(8)(a) Staffing levels.
- Regulation 19 (1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of Child.
- Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials.
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child.
- Regulation 28 Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child, Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Junior Preschool, Wobbler 1 and Wobbler 2 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 two operation managers, 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)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise if required.
 - (b) A review of the roster showed that a named person in charge or the deputy is rostered to be on the premises at all times during the service opening hours.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure within the service, this was clearly displayed on the wall in the hallway and at each care room.

- (2) A review of paperwork and conversation with management showed that 17 staff have commenced employment in the service since the last inspection in February 2024. The files of these staff along with the student file were reviewed in full, along with the Garda vetting of all staff who have direct access to children within the service.
- (a) Seventeen written and verified references were available from a past employer in relation to twelve adults working within the service.
 - (b) Nineteen written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer in relation to twelve adults working within the service.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults working within the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was available in relation to fourteen adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that all references and Garda vetting procedures were completed prior to any staff member being allowed access or contact with a child attending the pre-school.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that fifteen new staff members who worked directly with the children held 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.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured an adequate number of staff were available to the children on the day of inspection, nineteen staff were caring for 69 children.

(2) The registered provider ensured that ratios were maintained throughout the day. The following was observed.

- In Toddler Room 1, three adults were caring for ten children aged 2 years to 2years 11 months old.
- In Toddler Room 2, two adults were caring for ten children aged 2years 7 months to 3 years old.
- In Wobbler Room 1 three adults were caring for nine children aged 1 year to 1year 6 months old.
- In Wobbler Room 2, two adults were caring for ten children aged 1year 4 months to 2years old.
- In Preschool Room 2, three adults were caring for thirteen children aged 3 to 4 years old.
- In Preschool Room 1, four adults were caring for seventeen children aged 2-3 years old.

Three additional adults arrived later in the day to cover breaks.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times, this was reflected in the staff roster.

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

Basic Needs:

- Children were provided with regular meals and snacks freshly cooked by a chef onsite. Alternative food options were given to children who do not eat a meal that they were offered. Staff demonstrated knowledge and care towards each child's weaning stage and food preferences. Staff acknowledged the children's individual pace at mealtimes, they were not rushed or hurried.
- Nappy changing was completed on a regular basis, and this was observed to be a timely, pleasant experience with warm respectful interactions observed between adults and children.
- Children were provided with appropriate clothing for both the indoor and outdoor play environments. Hats and waterproof trousers for outdoors, the service provided additional clothing if needed. This facilitates comfort in their play experiences.
- Strategies such as observation, distraction and clear instruction, and appropriate supervision was used to support children's behaviours, and these were in line with the service policy on Behaviour Management. Staff were able to inform the inspectors of the strategies used to assist children manage their behaviours in a positive child-centred approach.

Supporting Relationships

- The adults within the service were observed to interact with children in a calm, soothing and respectful manner. Children were noted to be offered physical comfort and soothed if showing signs of needing regulation and reassurance. Supporting the child's feelings of security.
- Staff complete a daily log for each child, outlining meals, toileting and activities, this log is made available to parents, with daily conversations between families and staff occurring at pick up and drop off times. Ensuring family are connected to the service and their child's day.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The registered provider did not ensure that the care practices around sleep for younger children were suitable for their individual needs, and practices varied from the service Policy on Sleep, for example.
 - Staff in Wobbler room 1 did not respond in a timely manner to children's sleep cues; Between 11:03am and 11:53am two children were observed crying, rubbing their eyes and appeared tired. One child refused to eat dinner during this time. Staff acknowledged the children were tired however they did not respond appropriately, and the children were not put to bed until 11:59am. A delay in recognising and responding to children's sleep cues can cause upset for young children.
 - A child who had been placed to sleep was awoken and brought to the care room to receive prescribed medication as it was not administered prior to the sleep routine having commenced. This did not adequately ensure the sleep needs of the child were met while also posing a risk of a potential medication error or missed dose.

2. Staff did not adequately manage transitions in the service, for example.
 - Children in Wobbler 1 were observed to sit at the tables in preparation for dinner at 11.22am. The meal arrived in the room at 11:29am and was not served to the children until 11:35am. During this time children were observed to show an interest in the food, getting off their chairs, pointing to the food and becoming vocal. Transitions should be managed appropriately to prevent long periods of waiting for children.
 - A child was observed to arrive in the service during the transition from dinnertime to sleep. Due to the busyness of the room at that time, the child did not have adequate support to settle into the service and was observed to become upset. Although the service followed its settling in policy the timing of the arrival during a busy period was no conducive to ensuring a relaxed transition into the care room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The registered provider has ensured that management will provide support and monitor transition times daily. Communication boards have been commenced within the care room.
2. The registered provider has stated that a team meeting was held to re-educate staff on quality care practices to include transitions and daily care needs within the centre. The manager will continue to review settling in times for new families in a partnership approach. Communication boards have been commenced within the care room and a revision of policies undertaken.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic and evidence of staff education have been submitted.
2. Photographic evidence along with Policy documentation have been submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions undertaken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances under Regulation 19.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

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

Compliance Information

The rooms were bright and inviting play spaces for which the children could play and explore.

- In the Junior Preschool Room, Wobbler 1 and Wobbler 2 Rooms, a range of play materials and equipment were easily accessible and suitable to the age and stage of development of the children attending each room nurturing children's independence, ability to make decisions, enabling exploration through play.
- The furniture provided in each care room was low level and suitable to the needs and age of the children. There were sufficient number of low tables and chairs to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in each care room. Indoor climbing frames and slides were utilised in the younger rooms and children were observed to partake in risky age-appropriate play.
- Rooms were thoughtfully laid out to meet the needs of the children within, there was designated areas of interest and artwork was displayed throughout.
- Cosy areas with couches, chairs, soft mats and rugs for rest and relaxation were present.
- An enclosed outdoor play area was available for the children which consisted of a soft artificial grass. The equipment and toys available included a sand pit with cover and supporting equipment, bikes, ride in car, seesaw, wheelbarrow and blackboard providing learning opportunities for the children.

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 to the service was monitored and managed by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- Internal doors within the wobbler rooms had secured low level doors which allowed staff access to each room whilst preventing children from exiting.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children throughout the inspection.
- Cleaning products were observed to be stored up high out of reach of children.
- There was an up-to-date risk assessment available in each care room which was fully completed.
- The room temperature was maintained between the recommended ambient temperature of 18-22°C in a care room.

Infection Control:

- The premises were maintained 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 paper towels were available at all wash hand basins used by the children and the staff members.
- The tables were wiped down before mealtime.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of reach of the children and clearly labelled with the owner's name.

Safe Sleep:

- 10 minutes sleep check observations were recorded on all sleeping children. The temperature of the sleep room was recorded at 20°C this was within the required range between 18-22 °C.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Effective handwashing technique was not consistent across the service. For example, in Wobbler Room 1:
 - Not all children's hands were not washed in a timely manner upon return from outdoor play.
 - Staff were inconsistent in washing their hands after nappy changing.
 - Staff were not noted to wash their hands between cleaning table surfaces, soothing children and giving medication. It is acknowledged that gloves were used during these practices however effective consistent handwashing practice is necessary to prevent the risk of cross contamination and therefore the risk of infection.

Safe Sleep:

2. The registered provider did not ensure adequate completion of the required paperwork in relation to children aged under two years of age who have transitioned to a low-level bed in line with Tusla's "Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months". The following was observed;
 - Individual sleep care plans were available for two children under 2 years old who had transitioned to a low-level bed however the plan did not clearly identify how the service established that the children were developmentally ready to move from a cot to a low-level bed in line with the guidance. Children should only be considered for transition to a low-level bed once the service has identified clear developmental markers that suggest the child is developmentally ready to transition.
 - Appropriate risk assessments detailing the potential risks to the children sleeping on low level beds were not available. It is acknowledged that while risk assessments were available for these two children these assessments did not detail any identified hazards or risks to the children while sleeping in a low bed. Detailed risk assessments must be carried out in line with the guidance detailing both the identified risk to the child from sleeping in a cot but also the risk posed when the child sleeps in equipment other than a cot.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The registered provider has ensured that management have undertaken handwashing re-education with staff to include effective handwashing and hygiene practices, practical demonstrations were also undertaken. Management will monitor handwashing.

Safe Sleep:

- The registered provider has ensured that all children less than two years have access to a cot, with a consideration being given for risk assessments for children less than 2 years requiring a low-level bed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic and documentary evidence has been submitted and reviewed for both non-compliances.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliances under Regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider has ensured that the premises is insured as a full day care service with an expiry date of the 31 January 2025.