

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY053		
Name of Service:	Cocoon Childcare Santry		
Address of Service:	Block F Milner Square, Shanowen Road, Santry, Dublin 9		
Eircode:	D09 EF40		
Name of Registered Provider:	Nicola Battams		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	08/02/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	66	PM 61
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8		
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Finnegan Hayes & E. Griffin		
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.

Description of service

Cocoon Childcare Santry is a privately operated full day care service; one of 14 services operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to provide 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 room and operates from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm from Monday to Friday. 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 twenty-five staff including an operations manager who attends the service regularly, two service managers, two assistant managers, 19 Early years practitioners and a cook. One manager, one assistant manager and 16 early years practitioners were present in the service when the inspectors arrived. The operations manager arrived shortly after the inspectors followed later by the other service manager. One of the service managers was assigned kitchen duty as the cook was on leave and all other staff were available to work directly with the children.

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 Regulation 16 Records relating to the preschool service, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child and as a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2, Toddler room 1 and Toddler room 2.

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 operations manager, service managers, 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

(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)(a)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required. The deputy person in charge was present in the service when the inspector arrived.

(2) A review of the staff roster and conversation with the deputy person in charge showed that there are currently twenty-five staff employed in the service. The files of all twenty-five staff currently employed in the service were reviewed as part of the inspection.

(a)(b) Fifty written and validated references were available in relation to twenty-five staff members.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for twenty-five staff members.

(d) Police vetting was available for eighteen adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.

(4) Evidence was available to show that twenty-three staff members 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 and Youth Affairs.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Evidence was not available to show that a qualification held by one staff member was deemed eligible by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4) The staff member has applied to the DCEDIY, for qualification recognition for work in the Early Learning and Care sector. Our recruitment staff will ensure that staff qualifications are listed on the current 'DCEDIY Early Years Recognised Qualifications' document. When required, an application to the DCEDIY will be submitted and confirmation of eligibility to practice will be placed on the staff member's file.

Supporting documentation submitted

Confirmation of submission to the DCEDIY was reviewed.

Summary Comment

Regulation 9(4) remains outstanding. The registered provider is requested to submit the qualification recognition to the inspectorate when received.

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) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children on the day of inspection. Sixteen staff were caring for 66 children when the inspectors arrived in the service. An assistant manager was available to provide assistance in the care rooms as needed.

(2) Ratios were maintained on the day of inspection. The following was observed;

- In Wobbler room 1, three staff were caring for 7 children aged 12-18 months.
- In Wobbler room 2, two staff were caring for 8 children aged 18 months-2 years.
- In Toddler room 1, three staff were caring for 10 children aged 1-2 years.
- In Toddler room 2, two staff were caring for 9 children aged 18months-2 years.
- In Preschool room 1, three adults were caring for 15 children aged 2.5-3 years old.
- In Preschool room 2, three adults were caring for 17 children aged 3-5 years old.

The operations manager, service manager and assistant manager were available in a supernumerary position and available to cover in rooms as needed.

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:

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

(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 that the following records were kept in line with the regulations;

- (i) A staff roster which detailed the staff present and on leave on the day of inspection was available for review.
- (j) A sample of twelve medication administration records were reviewed and were found to be complete with all necessary details included.
- (k) A sample of twenty accident and incident record forms were reviewed and were found to be complete with all necessary details included.

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

(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)(a)

Basic needs:

- The service provides all food consumed in the service in line with their healthy eating policy and a three-week menu which offered a variety of food for both meals and snacks. The children receive three meals and two snacks each day including; breakfast, morning snack, dinner, afternoon snack and tea. Food was provided at regular intervals throughout the day and staff advised that alternative meals will be provided for children who don't eat the meals offered.
- Mealtimes were a social occasion and staff were observed to sit with children while they ate. In Toddler room 1 children were supported to self-feed using the utensils provided and their hands to fully experience the food. Staff were supportive of this process and did not attempt to prevent the children exploring the food with their hands which is important for their development.

Physical and material environment:

- Toys and materials were observed to be stored at a level accessible to the children and grouped thematically throughout the service which encouraged independent spontaneous play experiences.
- Low level tables and chairs allowed children to engage in tabletop activities and mealtimes comfortably.
- Language and literacy development was supported in the care rooms through songs and stories.

Supporting relationships with children:

- Children were observed to be unrestricted in the play and movement throughout the room and staff were observed to sit at the children's level engaging in their play in a supportive way.
- Staff were observed to record information about the children's day which is relayed to parents at collection time.
- Forms which are readily available to parents in the entrance hall offered parents an opportunity to come into the service and engage in activities with the children. Discussion with staff in Wobbler room 1 showed that parents have availed of this opportunity and staff discussed the benefits of having the parents in for both the children, parents and staff.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

1. In Wobbler room 1 a child was observed to be put down for a nap wearing leggings and socks which were soiled and had wet patches following dinner. The other children were observed to have all outer wear removed prior to nap time. Damp or soiled clothes should be removed from children as soon as possible to ensure the comfort of the children.
2. The bookshelf in Toddler room 1 was not adequate for the number of books held and impeded a child in their attempts to tidy up before dinner time when a child was observed attempting to tidy two books onto the shelf at clean up time, the books were observed to fall repeatedly to the floor as there was not space for them. The child attempted a number of times and sought adult help to fix the issue before wandering away and leaving the books on the floor. The child's independence and autonomy was not supported by the equipment provided.

(b)

3. Staff did not seek assistance from available cover staff when required to ensure the needs of the children in their care were adequately met for example;
 - In Wobbler room 1 between 11:56am and 12:20pm two staff were caring for eight children two of whom were still settling into the service. One staff member was caring for one child who was upset and observed crying while the other staff member completed some cleaning tasks following dinner and prepared the children for naptime. A second child was observed to be upset at different intervals during the time, one child was eating dinner at the table while the other children wandered around the room.

A child was observed taking food from the child who was eating, and the staff member had to put the child they were helping to settle down to remove the child who was taking food from the table, this increased the level of upset the child was experiencing and they began to cry more. The child who had been taking food was then observed sitting on the floor eating food which had not been cleaned up. At 12:20pm the service manager arrived in the room to support staff. The individual needs of the children present were not adequately met during this time additional staff were required during this transition.

- In Toddler room 1 the inspector observed an odour when they entered at 11:18am. Moments later a staff member was observed looking for a wedge to hold the door open and stated that a child had a soiled nappy and needed to be changed. The children proceeded to tidy up and were asked to sit at the table in preparation for dinner which they did. At 11:27am the staff member approached a staff member who was passing the care room and asked that they get the service manager, who arrived in the care room at 11:28am to cover ratios during the nappy change. The manager was observed a number of times in the hallway outside of the care room between 11:18am and 11:25am.
- In Toddler room 2 a child who does not sleep was observed engaging in quiet activities in a darkened room from 12pm until 12:44pm while eight children were settling to sleep. Staff advised that the child normally goes to the Preschool room 1 at 12pm however they could not leave as they were needed in ratio.

It is acknowledged that during these time periods additional staff were available to provide support to the care rooms.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. To refresh the key components of 'Quality Care Practices', a team meeting was held with both the management and staff team. This included the importance of mealtime transitions, daily care needs and safe sleep. The centre management team and the centre QLP, will actively monitor quality care practices within the centre. Bi-monthly team meetings will include training topics to support and promote awareness of quality practices.
2. The library unit was replaced with a larger unit, immediately after the inspection had taken place. The centre management team will actively monitor that furniture within the care room, are appropriate and purposeful for the age and stage of development.

- Additional staff have been assigned to the junior care rooms to support their mealtimes and preparation for sleep. All staff are reminded to call on the support staff or a member of the management team, when required throughout the day. Cover staff will be assigned to care rooms on the weekly staff roster, internal room phones will be used where needed to call on support.

Supporting documentation submitted

Team meeting information and photographs have been reviewed.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances under Regulation 19.

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 secure on arrival to the service which prevented unauthorised persons gaining access and prevented children leaving unsupervised. Staff were observed to attend the door to allow access.
- The gate into the garden adjacent to Wobbler room 1 was secured to prevent access from the street.
- Toys and equipment in the outdoor area were maintained in good condition free from hazards.
- Cleaning supplies were stored out of reach of the children throughout the service.
- Electrical cables and blind cords were secured out of reach to prevent a risk to the children.
- Radiators were mounted to the walls above adult height out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- The mattresses used in cots in the service were wipeable and maintained free from hazards.
- Individual storage was available for children's items such as creams and soothers.
- Dispensed soap and hand towels were available throughout the service to facilitate adequate hand washing.

- Foot pedal operated bins were available in care rooms and sanitary areas for hygienic disposal of contaminated materials.

Fire Safety:

- Staff in Toddler room 1 were aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. The nappy changing mat used by children in Toddler room 2 was observed to have dirt and debris underneath and posed an infection control risk.
2. Staff did not ensure adequate cleaning and hygiene practices in the sanitary area used by the children in Toddler room 2 and Preschool room 2 which posed a risk of cross infection for example;
 - One toilet was observed to be soiled and remained uncleaned for a period of 20 minutes. Children continued to use the toilet during this time.
 - A child was observed to return to the care room without washing their hands having used the toilet.
3. Warm water was not available in two sinks which were available for handwashing; the temperature of the water in the sink in Wobbler room 2 was 7.5°C at 10:32am while the water in the sink in the sanitary area used by Toddler room 2 was 8.1°C at 11:27am. Warm water is required to support adequate hand washing and prevent the spread of infection.
4. In Toddler room 1 a wicker pouf seat was observed in the cosy area. The wicker was torn and frayed, and the unit could not be adequately cleaned for infection control purposes. This presented and potential risk of injury to the children and also an infection control risk.

Safe Sleep:

5. The registered provider did not ensure that children aged under two years of age were provided with adequate sleep facilities 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;
 - In Toddler room 1 seven children aged 21-23 months and in Wobbler room 2 two children aged 19-20 months were observed to sleep on low level stackable beds at nap time. A mattress with a minimum 6cms depth is required for children under 2 years to ensure the children's comfort while they sleep.
 - While individual sleep plans were available for eight of the nine children these did not identify the individual developmental and cognitive milestones which the child had reached to support the transition from a cot to a low-level bed; an identical generic statement was input on each form stating the child has met the developmental and cognitive milestones inline with the guidance.

Individual sleep plans should recognise the individual child's development to ensure the needs of the children are appropriately met.

- The sleep care plans reviewed indicated that a daily risk assessment would be conducted to ensure the safety of the children following the move to a low-level bed. A review of the risk assessment in Toddler room 1 showed that it did not adequately identify the potential risks to the children sleeping in the room. For example, the risk assessment did not reference low level beds instead referencing cots and identifying the risks to children in cots. While observing the children in toddler room 1 between 12:32 and 1pm a child was observed to leave their bed and climb onto the bed of a sleeping child; such risks were not identified in the risk assessment. Detailed risk assessments must be carried out in line with the guidance detailing any 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.

6. Physical sleep checks and recording of same were observed to not be completed in line with best practice or the service policy. For example;

In Toddler room 1:

- One child was observed to be asleep at 12:23pm followed by a second child at 12:32pm. Staff were not observed to conduct a physical check of either child between the time the inspector observed them to be asleep and 1pm.
- Staff were observed to begin the written record of sleep checks at 12:50pm and a review of these at 1pm showed that they were completed retrospectively for both children above beginning at 12:30pm.
- Two children were observed to be asleep at 1pm however no record of this had been recorded on the sleep log.

In Toddler room 2:

- At 12:47pm one child who was asleep was not recorded on the sleep check log. Staff were unaware of this when it was brought to their attention.

Fire Safety:

7. In Wobbler room 1 the attendance records were not completed contemporaneously for example at 10am the attendance of one child who staff advised had been present for approximately two hours had not been recorded in the attendance log. This posed a potential risk to the child in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The changing mat was addressed immediately on the day of inspection. The centre management team are actively monitoring all sanitary areas throughout the day, to ensure high levels of cleanliness and infection control.
2. All staff were retrained in the Supervision Policy and are aware of the requirement to actively supervise the use of toilets on an ongoing basis. The centre management team are actively monitoring all sanitary areas throughout the day, to ensure high levels of cleanliness and infection control.
3. The heating valves on both sinks were replaced the day after the inspection took place. Daily water records are completed each morning, and where issues arise the maintenance team will be contacted.
4. The wicker pouffe was removed from the care room immediately after the inspection had taken place. Staff will remove damaged materials from the care environments where necessary and inform a member of management to organise its replacement.

Safe Sleep:

5. Three of the seven children have since turned two and continue to sleep on portable beds. The children in both wobbler rooms have access to a cot for sleep. Foldable cots are available for the remaining four children in the Toddler room and will be in use until they turn two years of age. Further review of the children's individual risk assessments has taken place. Foldable cots will be accessible to all children under 2, until 6cm depth mattresses can be sourced for our existing portable beds.
6. All staff were retrained in our safe sleep policy, and the centre management team are actively monitoring the sleep rooms, and the completion of supporting paperwork. The centre management team will actively monitor the completion of sleep charts and attendance records, to ensure that they are accurate.

Fire Safety:

7. All staff were retrained in our supervision policy, and the requirement of children being signed in and out on attendance records when entering and exiting the care rooms. The centre management team will actively monitor the completion of sleep charts and attendance records, to ensure that they are accurate.

Supporting documentation submitted

Team meeting information and photographs have been reviewed.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance under Regulation 23.

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) A review of FAR certificates and the staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that a person trained in First Aid Response (FAR) was rostered to be on the premises available to the children during the service opening hours.

(2) (a)(b) suitably equipped first aid boxes were available in the care rooms throughout the service mounted to the wall at adult height out of reach of the children but accessible as needed.

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) The registered provider ensured that a record of fire drills was maintained in the service. Detailed records and conversation with staff showed that fire drills are conducted monthly, with the most recent fire drill taking place on the 11th of January 2024.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was reviewed. The record showed that the firefighting equipment was last serviced in August 2023 while the smoke alarms were last serviced on 16th of January 2024.
- (4) Fire evacuation plans were displayed throughout the service in care rooms and communal areas.