

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY379
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Name of Service:	Hope Montessori & Autism Care Centre
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Address of Service:	Unit 6 Goldenbridge Industrial Estate, Tyrconnell Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8.
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sherene Powell
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date 1 of Inspection:	14/11/2023
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Date 2 of Inspection:	15/11/2023
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No of pre-school children: Day 1	AM	38	PM	30
No of pre-school children: Day 2	AM	40	PM	39

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Loughlinstown Health Centre Loughlinstown County Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	Olivia Quill and Sarah Quigley
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

Hope Montessori & Autism Care Centre is one of a multiple of five services operated across Ireland by the registered provider. The early years service is registered to provide full day care including part-time and sessional care and education for children aged from one to six years. The service operates from 8am until 6pm Monday to Friday.

The early years service is based in a purposely adapted premises which is located within an industrial estate in the centre of Inchicore village. Five care rooms were available for pre-school children on the first floor of the premises. Two of the five pre-school classes exclusively provide care for autistic children and offers a morning session from 9am until 1pm and an afternoon session from 2pm until 6pm. A designated sleep room was provided for children under two years. An outdoor play area for the children is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

In total seventeen adults are employed in the service including the registered provider and a household member of staff. On the 14 November 2023 sixteen adults were present. This included the designated person in charge and deputy, a household staff member, two students and eleven staff who worked directly with the children. The registered provider was not present but works in the service as rostered. Two additional staff members arrived after the inspection had commenced from another service owned by the registered provider. These staff members provided additional support in different care rooms throughout the day as required.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations.

The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

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

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

The 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.

This inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 Staffing levels

Regulation 16(h),(i),(j) and (k) Record in relation to pre-school service

Regulation 19 Health welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 First Aid

Regulation 26 Fire safety measures.

Regulations 27 Supervision.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Lillies, Rosebud and Lotus rooms and did not include the Daffodil/ Bluebell room and the Sweet Peas 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days of the inspection and the registered provider who attended the feedback meeting using an online application on the second day of 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) Following a discussion with the person in charge it was confirmed that seventeen adults are employed in the service. Additionally on the days of inspection two adults from one of the other services owned by the registered provider worked directly with the children and two students were present.

Documentation was reviewed in respect of these twenty-one adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

- (a) Of the forty-two validated, written references that were required, twenty-four were available from a past employer.
- (b) A further eighteen validated, written references were available from a source other than a past employer for staff who did not have any previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting of An Garda Síochána were available for all adults working in the service.
- (d) International police vetting was available for fifteen of the adults who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six months as an adult.

(3) The inspection of documentation pertaining to Regulation 9(3) was limited to four adults who had commenced employment in the service following the last date of inspection on the 28 November 2022. The documentation reviewed evidenced that procedures outlined under Regulation 9(2) had been carried out prior to these adults commencing employment in the service.

(4) A record was available evidencing that six of the adults employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification. A further eight adults who did not have the required qualification were in possession of a letter of eligibility to practice from the minister, and four adults did not require a qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) Police vetting was not available for one adult who lived outside the state for a period of longer than six months as an adult.
- (4) There was no evidence that the qualifications for three adults were the equivalent of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care & Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or an equivalent qualification. It is acknowledged the registered provider was able to demonstrate to the inspectors that two staff members are currently working towards obtaining the required qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) The staff member is currently in the process of getting the vetting. Once received it will be forwarded to Tusla for review. The service will review all staff CVs to ensure that if they have lived in any other country, they produce their police report prior to hiring the staff member.

(4) The two staff members have completed their additional modules required to qualify them to work in the Early years setting. Applications have been submitted to Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) for recognition for a full level 5. We shall email you their DCEDIY qualification recognition once they are issued. The 3rd person is a volunteer and this volunteer is not in ratio nor a class teacher.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence as stated by the registered provider in the Corrective and Preventive action.

Summary Comment

The registered provider confirmed one adult present works as a volunteer as is not included in the adult: child ratio. As two staff members have yet to receive their recognition from the DCEDIY the non-compliance remains. The Regulatory requirement has not 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.

(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) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were thirty eight children attending the service being supervised by eleven adults on the first day of inspection. On the second day of inspection there were forty children attending being supervised by twelve adults.

(8)(a) Two adults were rostered to be on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

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:

(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;

Compliance Information

(h) Details of attendance of each child was recorded at the time of arrival and departure on a daily basis.

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), (b)

Children were provided with food and healthy snacks at regular intervals. The designated person in charge confirmed the service uses an external catering company to provide hot meals which are prepared daily by the cook. Morning snack consisted of a platter of chopped up fruit and vegetables including apple, melon, peppers, and carrots. At lunch time a hot meal of beef casserole with vegetables and minced beef was served with mash potato. Suitable cutlery was provided. Drinking water was available in the Rosebud and Lilly room and staff in these rooms offered water with snacks and meals. Some children who did not want the hot meal had a packed lunch provided by their parents.

All children were provided with an opportunity to sleep after their meal. Children slept on low beds in the Lotus room. Staff remained with the children providing reassurance while they settled to sleep. Children from the Lilly room slept in cots in a separate sleep room.

Older children used the toilet as needed with staff available to help. Younger children's nappies were changed as required. During these times warm one to one interactions were observed between staff and children.

The Lilly, Rosebud and Lotus rooms were arranged to provide a range of play materials and areas of interest allowing children the freedom to play and explore. Areas of interest and toys included home corners, construction areas, musical toys, small world toys, jigsaws and a library area.

The materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving and each area was adequately resourced. Suitable cosy areas were available in each of the care rooms to allow children to rest as required.

A fully enclosed outdoor play area was available to the rear of the premises which was divided into two separate play spaces. The first area had an artificial grass surface and was used by the younger children. The second area had a rubber tile surface. The outdoor area was well resourced with a range of developmentally appropriate play equipment. Children were supported to dress appropriately for outdoor play with coats and hats. All children were observed to spend time in the outdoor area.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b) Some care practices observed were not suitable and appropriate as evidenced by;

1. In the Lotus room, a staff member was observed to lift a child who was seated in the rest area by their elbow taking them to the table. The staff member was also observed to pull another child away from the table when they had finished eating by the collar of their jumper.
2. In the Lotus room there was no water available until 12.32pm. Water was not offered to the children with their snack or dinner. When the water arrived not all children were offered a drink of water as some were playing.
3. In the Lotus room bibs were not provided for three children who required them. Their clothing was visibly soiled and wet when they had finished eating their dinner. Two of the children were not cleaned and placed to sleep in their soiled clothes.
4. In the Lotus room seven children were not offered a blanket for comfort at sleep time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Visual aids of good practice on the handling of children have been added to all classes. A meeting was held after the inspection with all staff. At this meeting the proper handling of children was discussed, and staff were retrained on how to pick up a child safely. An email has also been circulated to all staff with the steps of how to pick up a child appropriately. Positive behaviour management was also reviewed.

Staff members were reminded that no matter what the situation is, they are to get to the child's level and talk them through verbal requests. This will be ongoing as management will ensure that all staff adhere to this good practice.

2. Water station visuals have been added to each classroom to assist children to locate the location the water and their cups easily. Staff have been advised to offer children water regularly and to take note of those that have not been actively drinking, and those who do not have the skills to request for water. Staff members are supporting children to ensure that they have appropriate amount of water during the day. Housekeeping staff have been instructed to check that all classrooms are served water first thing in the morning and to ensure that bottled water is replaced immediately once the previous one is empty. Staff are to monitor it also throughout the day and make use of the Walkie Talkies and Teams to communicate to the manager or the housekeeping team for water replacement.
3. Staff members have been reminded to always to use bibs at mealtimes, especially for the children who require them. These are stored within the classroom for ease of access. Staff have also been reminded that children's clothes are to be changed when they are soiled, to ensure the children remain comfortable. The management team will continue to support staff to ensure that when staff members forget, the manager or the room leader remind them. The staff will ensure that children have bibs on before mealtimes. Managers to take a quick check, should the teacher not remember to have bibs on the children.
4. A sleep time protocol has been reviewed by the management team and blanket has been added to the check list to serve as a reminder for staff members, should they forget. Spare blankets are available for all children in the service should parents forget to bring in blankets for their children if they require one. Parents have been asked to ensure that the children have their own blanket returned to the service after they have been sent home for a wash over the weekend. Manager will support sleep time transition and ensure that sleep time protocols are observed, including provision of beddings.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written and photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions stated by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. The Regulatory requirement has been met. Practice will be reviewed on next inspection.

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:

- External doors were secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school.
- All cleaning agents and medication was stored safely out of reach of children.
- Toys and play equipment used by children was in good condition.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including following outdoor play and using the toilet and before meals.
- Staff were observed cleaning the tables before mealtime.
- A system was in place for effective sterilisation of soothers which were appropriately stored.
- Bed linen was stored in individual containers.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff were familiar with the medication policy. Medication given was recorded correctly by staff and signed by parents.
- A care plan was available in the Rosebud room for a child with a specific medical condition. Staff were familiar with the care plan and the medication was clearly labelled and safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff were familiar with the safe sleep policy. Children were physically monitored while sleeping and sleep checks were documented every ten minutes. The sleep room was maintained at the required temperature while children slept.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Lotus room one child had whole grapes in his lunch box as a snack. The inspector observed the child and three other children eating the grapes posing a potential choking risk.
2. In the Lotus room cord blinds were not safely secured and were hanging in reach of the children this posed a potential safety risk.
3. In the Lotus room a piece of the plaster on a window sill was heavily chipped and worn exposing internal metal rendering. A sharp piece of metal was protruding from the window sill which children were observed playing at posing a potential injury risk.

Infection Control:

4. Nappy changing practice observed was inconsistent. Some staff did not follow the nappy changing policy and remove their soiled gloves after nappy changing posing a potential infection control risk.
5. Children noses were not cleaned in a timely manner.
6. In the cot room off the Lilly room's there was no waterproof mattress protector provided on the six cots posing a potential infection control risk.
7. In the Lotus room one child was observed drinking from another child's beaker. The staff member took it away from the child but did not clean it.
8. In the Lotus room the lacquered surface on one of the tables in the home corner was heavily chipped in two parts and as a result could not be cleaned effectively.
9. In the sanitary area off the Rosebud room the pedal operated nappy changing bin provided was broken.
10. In the Lotus room paint was chipped off the windowsill and a sticky residue was present on the surface.

Safe Sleep:

11. In the cot room two cots mattress had loose fitting sheets rather than a fitted sheet posing a potential safety risk.

Fire Safety:

12. Although records of arrival and departure times were accurately recorded in the care rooms for each child, details of attendance were insufficient to ensure the safety of some children in attendance as follows. A child who was present in the Rosebud room during the morning was recorded as being present in the Bluebell room. Three children who didn't sleep came to the Rosebud room from 1-2pm these children were not recorded on the register. This situation could lead to a child not been accounted for in the event of a fire on the premises and it may impede the safe evacuation of all children in the event of a fire.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All lunch boxes are to be checked by teachers as soon as the children arrive, and before they are placed in the fridge. Any child who comes with full grapes, the teacher will have the grapes removed and cut as recommended. Parents have also been reminded once again to cut up grapes and similar fruits that may be brought in their child's lunch box. All lunch boxes are to be checked by staff as soon as the children arrive and before they are placed in the fridge. Any child who has a lunch that has items that are not safe for children or that are not a part of healthy eating policy, will not be permitted to have them and will be offered a healthy safe alternative being provided by the service daily.
2. The blind cords have hooks available to keep them secured. This has also been added to the classroom risk assessment. Staff are to supervise the children and ensure that they cannot reach or access the blind cords at any point in time, throughout the day. Manager is to check the classroom to ensure that blinds are being secured at all times of the day and that no child has access to blind cords at any point in time throughout the day.
3. The area has been temporary and securely blocked off to ensure it does not pose any possible hazard to the children accessing the area. The builder has been contacted, to get it fixed, and we are awaiting a response from the builder. Management will ensure that builders constantly come in to access the service for any possible repairs.

Infection Control:

4. In addition to the strict nappy changing procedure that we have in place, we have added a step-by-step visual guide to each sanitary area. This serves as a constant reminder to staff, should they tend to break the nappy changing procedure. Management team to continue and constantly revise nappy changing procedure with all staff.

5. Staff are encouraged to take swift action when a child's nose requires cleaning. Every classroom is supplied with tissues, gloves, and sanitiser for use. This is to ensure they clean the children's noses. We also encourage children to participate in self-care routines such as cleaning their own noses with support from staff. Manager to constantly go round the classrooms to ensure that this is being implemented.
6. Waterproof mattress protectors have been bought as suggested. Management will continue to ensure that there are enough mattress covers and spare sheets are available at all times.
7. The management has reminded Staff to adhere to the service's infection control policy, which they have all read. Emphasis was also laid on the importance of taking proper care of bottles or any soiled item, even if they are being sent home to parents for proper sterilising.
8. The scratched area of the table has been repainted. Management will constantly review the classroom risk assessment and ensure that onsite managers support the staff to properly implement this good practice.
9. The bin has been replaced with a new one. To ensure a spare pedal bin is kept in the service, so if any bin may break unexpectedly, the service can replace it immediately on the day.
10. The sticky residue was cleaned off. The area will be repainted once the painter gives us a date. Building check has been implemented recently as part of the service monthly audit which is being done by the manager with the support of the management team. Ongoing supervision and check will be done by senior management to ensure the necessary work is completed when the need arises.

Safe Sleep:

11. This has been discussed with both staff and parents to ensure that the correct sheet size is used at all times. Spare sets are available in the service for children should they require it. A reminder visual has been sent to all staff and it has been displayed in the sleep room. Appropriate sheet covers must be always used. More sheets must be available in the service. This must be monitor by the management team to avoid any lapses.

Fire Safety:

12. The child has now been added to Rosebuds class for morning session and Bluebells class for the afternoon session. The children who do not sleep and are being moved to Rosebuds room will now be manually recorded while our IT Team is working to set it up on our online system. To add a child to both morning and afternoon sessions, where applicable. To ensure that the records of the children who are not sleeping are taken if they must be transitioned to another class. This will continue manually until our IT Team finishes the online setting.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Written and photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

Written and photographic evidence.

Safe Sleep:

Photographic evidence.

Fire Safety:

Written evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions stated by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. The Regulatory requirement has been met. Practice will be reviewed on 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) A person trained in first aid for children was immediately available at all times on the days of inspection.

(2)

(a) First aid boxes were safely stored in easily accessible and conspicuous locations within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times.

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 of monthly fire drills completed was available. The last fire drill was completed on the 10 of October 2023.
 - (b) The maintenance record for the fire fighting equipment was dated the 13 November 2023 and for the smoke alarm was dated the 30 May 2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was clearly displayed in a conspicuous position in the care rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The pre-school children were supervised at all times throughout the days of inspection.