

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL071		
Name of Service:	Cocoon Childcare - Balbriggan		
Address of Service:	Cardy Rock, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	K32 V205		
Name of Registered Provider:	Nicola Battams		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	08/02/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	68	PM 47
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM. Coyle & S. Cully		
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 Balbriggan is one of 14 early years services operated by the registered provider across Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional care and education to children from 0 to 6 years with eligible pre-school children facilitated to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 3 hours daily for 38 weeks annually. This full day care service is conducted from a purpose-built 2-storey premises which is located in a residential setting on the outskirts of Balbriggan in north Co. Dublin and operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm from Monday to Friday. Six care rooms are provided for pre-school children on the premises. The Baby room, the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2 and the Toddler room are located on the ground floor and the Full-time preschool room and the Sessional ECCE room are located on the first floor. Three separate rooms are currently provided on the ground floor to accommodate sleeping children.

Staffing

A service manager is employed who oversees the operational management of this service, working with a team of 26 staff members who work directly with the children, in addition to a full-time chef and a staff member who is scheduled to clean the service from 5.00 to 8.30pm each Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The service manager and assistant manager worked directly with the children in addition to coordinating the operation of the service. One of the company's operations executives arrived in the service after the inspection had commenced and was present for the remainder of the day. The registered provider who does not work directly with the children attending the service was present in the service on the afternoon of 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,15, 19, 23,25 and 26; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 24.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child.

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*

(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) The service manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

The files for 28 staff members including the company's operations executive were reviewed.

(2) (a)&(b) Two validated written references were available for the 28 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 28 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(d) International police vetting was available for 14 staff members who resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 26 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 10.10am and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Baby room there were 5 babies aged 7 months to 1 year attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members. One child was present in the morning and another child was present on the afternoon of inspection as part of their settling in process.
- In the Wobbler room 1 there were 9 children aged between 1 year 1 month and 1 year 7 months, all attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Wobbler room 2 there were 6 children aged 1 year 8 months to 2 years being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler room there were 15 children aged between 2 years 1 month to 3 years being cared for by 4 staff members.
- In Full time Pre-school room, there were 15 children aged between 3-year 1 month and 4 year 11 months, being cared for by 3 staff members.

- In the Sessional ECCE room there were 18 children between the ages of 2 years 8 months to 5 years being cared for by 4 adults. Two of the 4 staff members was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with a child with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 23 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

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 following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- During the inspection the early years practitioners were observed to be caring and kind in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences. For example, the children who were settling into the Baby room on the day of inspection were provided with extra comforting and attention through the use of warm and gentle touch and tones to engage and support the children and the children's lead was followed as they explored their environment, all to very good effect.
- Mealtimes in the service were observed to be a social and pleasant experience for the children. Practitioners sat at the table whilst the children ate engaging them in conversation and provided assistance to the children with eating as they required it. The practitioners in the care rooms accommodating the younger children sat in front of the children who required assistance with eating warmly engaging with the children at their eye level.
- The children's nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required. The practitioners used the opportunity to engage warmly with the children chatting to them and singing songs. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently and gently reminded to wash their hands afterwards.
- The children in the Baby room were facilitated to sleep in the sleep room adjacent to the care room in line with their home routine and were placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if their sleep time coincided with mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke up. The children attending Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 were placed to sleep in a separate sleep room with the children attending the Toddler room placed to sleep in another sleep room which was set up with stackable beds after they had had their dinner.

- Throughout the care rooms the children exhibited familiarity with navigating their environments and they were observed moving between the interest areas selecting play materials. In the Baby room there was ample space for children to roll, crawl, pull themselves up and begin the early stages of walking in a safe space.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Throughout the service practitioners were observed interacting with children in a warm, caring and sensitive manner. Practitioners working in the care rooms accommodating the younger children spoke in soft gentle tones and provided reassurance and encouragement when children appeared unsure or upset. Practitioners positioned themselves close to children to provide a sense of security whilst giving the freedom to explore and investigate. Practitioners working with the older children supported children to interact positively with each other and modelled good social behaviours when interacting with each other, praising children for their behaviours particularly when they were helpful to others, took turns and shared resources.
- The practitioners in the care rooms were observed to work well together and supported each other in the care of the children. Practitioners updated each other on the children's care throughout the day which ensured the children's care needs were met in a timely manner.
- The inspectors were informed that a key person system was in operation whereby practitioners in each of the individual care rooms record observations on a specific group of children and use this information to plan for the individual learning needs of each child.
- Throughout the care rooms on the ground floor of the service practitioners maintained a written record of the children's food intake, nappy changes, sleep times and activities. Additionally, the practitioners were observed taking the opportunities to interact with parents at collection time and update them on their children's day in the service.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were bright and welcoming, and the play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play.
- The care rooms were laid out in clearly defined interest areas to prompt and support children to engage in self-directed and imaginative play. Interest areas included well developed home and kitchen corners with a range of accessorial equipment to promote and sustain the children's imaginary play experiences. Construction areas, transport toys, arts and crafts materials, musical instruments were available along with a variety of tabletop resources including jigsaws, interlocking toys and peg boards which supported the children's fine motor development.
- The Baby room was spacious and provided space for the children to crawl, explore and move around with stable props available to support children with walking. A well-resourced home area was available to support the children's imaginary play in addition to transport toys, musical instruments and low-level steps to support the children's motor development. Two comfortable armchairs were available to support the practitioners in nurturing the children.
- Throughout the care rooms sensory play experiences were facilitated indoors with tray-top activity tables filled with a range of sensorial materials including sand and water.
- A range of books were available in the library areas of the care rooms which provided choice and supported children's language development.
- Outdoor play is facilitated in the fully enclosed outdoor area located to the rear of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The furniture used at mealtimes in the Wobbler 1 room was not suitable for all of the children in the room. Younger children in the room were observed needing assistance on and off the chairs and when sliding down in their seat. While sitting on the chairs provided younger children's feet could not reach the floor or a firm surface such as a footrest. Developmentally appropriate furniture is required to ensure that all children can be involved in and enjoy mealtimes comfortably.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. Following on from the inspection, the three wobbler sized chairs were replaced with three chairs with seated inserts from storage.

Preventive Action

1. Both the centre management team and wobbler staff members will actively monitor that all furniture is appropriate and rotate accordingly based on the children's needs.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of suitably sized chairs in Wobbler room.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed and accepted

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 doors were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.

Infection Control:

- The service implemented effective soother management procedures, with all individually labelled soothers stored in personalised containers when not in use. Practitioners described appropriate management of mouthed toys and soothers including the requirement to wash these items in in soapy water after use and the daily preparation and use of the sterilising procedures provided in the service.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available at all wash hand basins to support effective hand hygiene procedures in the service.

- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were gently reminded, and assisted, when necessary, to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- The services nappy changing policy was observed to be implemented when practitioners changed children's nappies.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition and up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern were being performed and documented on all sleeping children.
- Based on an examination of the children's attendance records maintained in the service, all children under 2 years of age have access to a standard cot on a daily basis. On the day of inspection all children aged less than 2 years slept in standard cots provided in the service's sleep rooms.
- Adequate space of at least 50cm was maintained between the cots and stackable beds in the sleep rooms in the service.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A spray bottle of cleaning solution and a bottle of hand sanitiser was within children's reach as it was stored on a low windowsill in the ECCE 2 room.

Infection Control:

2. The flush chain of one toilet in the ECCE 2 sanitary facilities was broken and therefore too short for children to reach and use. The children were unable to flush the toilet after use.

Administration of Medication:

3. It was observed on a medicine administration form that a child in the ECCE 1 room had been administered a medication in the service on an on-going basis, beginning in November 2023. There was no record on the documentation to state the end date of this medication administration.

There was no medical care plan in place to document the child's medical condition, the purpose of the medication and the duration of time it was to be administered. During discussion with the registered provider, it was stated that it is the services policy to record the duration of time a medication is to be administered and for a medical care plan to be devised with a parent when medication is required to be administered on an on-going basis.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. An additional shelving unit was installed in the toilet area after the inspection took place, to ensure that all cleaning agents are stored out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

2. The toilet flush chain was replaced by the maintenance team immediately after the inspection took place.

Administration of Medication:

3. A parent requested that a pro-biotic be administered on an ongoing basis during the winter season for their child. All staff members have been retrained in service's medication administration policy and of the requirement for an end date to be completed on the medication administration form.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The centre management team will actively monitor that all cleaning agents and sanitiser, are stored out of reach of the children on an ongoing basis. All staff members are aware of this requirement.

Infection Control:

2. Service's sanitary area risk assessments have been updated to include that all toilet chains/flushes are in working order.

Administration of Medication:

3. All non-medicine products recorded on the medicine administration form will include an end date, and where required a Health care plan will be issued.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of cleaning agents stored on a shelf out of reach of children.

Photograph of toilet with flush chain replaced.

Evidence that medicine administration & procedure has been reviewed by staff members.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspectors were requested to record their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

Non-Compliance Information

(3)(a)(b) The service did not maintain accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection as evidenced in the following findings:

Two children who were present in the Baby room on the day of inspection, one child was present in the morning and one child was present in the afternoon were not signed into the attendance register.

This posed a risk of children not being accounted for in the event of an evacuation emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(3)(a)(b) Two children were settling into the setting and were included on a separate settling in/room movement form.

Preventive Action

(3)(a)(b) Going forward, the centre management team will include on inducting children on the weekly classroom register, from commencement of the settling in period.

Supporting documentation submitted

Sign in & out of room sheets

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance has been reviewed and accepted.

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 including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection in respect of a number of staff members.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises.

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 record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 06/02/2024.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 24/08/2023 and the smoke detection system on 28/02/2023.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.