

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL071
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Name of Service:	Cocoon Childcare - Balbriggan
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Address of Service:	Cardy Rock, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K32 V205
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nicola Battams
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	22/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	66	PM	50
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
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 Balbriggan is one of 15 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. Seven care rooms are provided for pre-school children on the premises, the Baby room, the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2, Toddler room 1 and Toddler room 2 are located on the ground floor and the ECCE 1 room and the ECCE 2 room which accommodates children attending the service on a sessional are located on the first floor. Two separate sleep rooms are currently provided on the ground floor. School-aged children are also accommodated in the service which operates for 51 weeks each year.

Staffing

A service manager is employed who oversees the operational management of this service, working with a team of 25 staff members who work directly with the children, in addition to a full-time chef and a staff member who is employed for housekeeping duties. The service manager and assistant manager work 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 during the course of the inspection.

Methodology

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

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

The findings on inspection are based on:

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

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ 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, 11,16, 19, 23 and 27. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby room, Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler 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.

Additional Information

The inspection was conducted following receipt of information to Tusla Early Years inspectorate.

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 12 staff members including 11 new staff members employed since the last inspection and the file for the company's operations executive were reviewed.

(2)(a) Eighteen validated written references were available from a past employer.

(b) Six validated written references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 12 new staff members whose files were reviewed. Garda vetting was reviewed for a further 14 staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for 8 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 11 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Documentary evidence was not available to confirm that 1 staff member whose file was reviewed and who works 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.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(4) The staff member sent her college letter to the DCEDIY for processing the day of the inspection. The staff member has since received her full Level 8 Honors Degree transcript of results.

Preventive Action

(4) The branch manager will continue to audit the staff files to avoid an administrative error occurring again. They will also ensure that any college letters with results are sent directly to the DCEDIY for processing before staff start.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence was provided.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 9 – management and recruitment has been adequately addressed.

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 3 babies aged 8 months to 1 year attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Wobbler room 1 there were 5 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 8 children aged 1 year 7 months to 1 year 11 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler room 1 there were 15 children aged between 2 years to 3 years 3 months being cared for by 4 staff members.
- In the Toddler room 2 there were 4 children aged between 3 years to 3 years 3 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In ECCE 1 room, there were 16 children aged between 3-year 1 month and 4 year 11 months, being cared for by 3 staff members.

- In the ECCE 2 room there were 15 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 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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(k) The service had a record in writing of the details of accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children. Nineteen records were sampled and found to be clear and legible and included parental signatures to confirm that had been informed and were aware of the incident involving their child on the day of occurrence.

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 are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service in the sampled rooms, the Baby room, Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2:

Basic needs:

- Throughout the sampled care rooms staff members were observed to be caring and attentive in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs and preferences.
- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service and healthy meals and snacks were provided for the children by the onsite chef at regular intervals throughout the day. Mealtimes were observed to be a pleasant unhurried experience with children given plenty of time to enjoy their meals. Staff members were observed sitting with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat. The staff members in the Baby room sat in front of the children who required assistance with eating warmly engaging with the children at their eye level. Throughout the care rooms the children's water bottles were accessible to them on low level shelving for them to take as desired throughout the day.
- The children had their nappies changed regularly and also, in between scheduled changes, as often as was required. Staff members from the Baby Room and the Wobbler Rooms were heard chatting and singing to the children when they were having their nappies changed. Children's personal care needs were attended to promptly with protective bibs were placed on younger children prior to eating and their hands and faces were cleaned afterwards. Sun cream was observed being applied to the children prior to going outdoors to play. Each child had their own sun cream provided by parents with a record of this kept.
- The children in the Baby room were facilitated to sleep 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. This was observed on the day of inspection with children in the Baby room placed to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness. The children attending the Baby room and Wobbler room slept in either of the 2 designated sleep rooms on the ground floor of the service with the children attending Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 placed to sleep at their scheduled period of rest after they had their dinner.
- The children attending the Baby room were provided with the opportunity to change position, roll, crawl and sit throughout the day with the staff members in the care room providing appropriate support. The children in both Wobbler rooms moved freely throughout the care rooms engaging in a variety of play opportunities. All of the children attending the Baby room, Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 enjoyed time in the outdoor play area on the day of inspection, the children attending the Baby room were safely transported to the outdoor play area in a pushchair and once there the children enjoyed time on

additional matting placed on top of the artificial grass and were observed to be constantly supervised by the staff members present.

Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the service, parents and children were observed being greeted on arrival to the service and staff members took the opportunity to provide feedback to parents and guardians on the children's day in the service when children were collected. In the Baby room and Wobbler rooms a daily record of the children's feeding, nappy changes, activities, general wellbeing and sleep was maintained for the children and shared with the parents when the children are collected from the service.
- Throughout the 3 care rooms the inspectors observed the staff members initiating conversations with the children, responding meaningfully to their verbal and non-verbal cues and providing regular praise and encouragement using gentle tones of voice. The staff members spoke positively and warmly to and about the children during the inspection.
- Family photographs were on display in the care rooms which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and bridge the gap with home.
- Staff members in the sampled care rooms were observed to work well together and supported each other in the care of the children, modelling positive ways of interacting with each other and the children. Staff members updated each other on the children's care throughout the day which ensured the children's care needs were met in a timely manner.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The Baby room provided clear floor space for children to lie, roll, sit, crawl and walk. Cosy areas with rugs and cushions were available in the care room and in one of these areas additional soft matting was provided along with 2 rigid horseshoe shaped cushions to support children in the early stages of sitting. Two adult armchairs were provided in this room to allow adults working with the children to sit and feed, cradle or comfort the children. A large wall mirror supported the children's visual senses and self-awareness skills. A well-resourced home area was available to support the children's imaginary play along with transport toys, musical instruments, stacking toys and soft bricks for the children to use.
- Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 were divided into areas of interest which facilitated freely chosen play opportunities for children to include home corner areas, cosy areas, construction and block areas,

transportation toys and small world materials. In addition, there was a mark making area and materials which supported children’s creativity. A wooden boat, wooden steps and ramp in Wobbler room 1 and ride on bikes in both rooms provided physical play opportunities for children.

- A range of books were available in the library areas of the Baby room and Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 which provided choice and supported children’s language development.
- A fully enclosed outdoor area, divided into two areas is located to the rear of the service and surfaced with artificial grass. In the outdoor area play area used for children under two years of age there was a small slide, playhouse, large plastic building bricks, large blackboard and chalk, ride in and ride on cars and ride on bikes which promoted gross motor and fundamental movement skills.

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.
- The outdoor play areas were fully enclosed and secure which reduced the risk of children exiting unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the outdoor space and premises.
- 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.
- Play materials and equipment provided in each care room were observed to be safe and suitable for the children present.
- Children’s health care plans were kept in the rooms and information about children’s allergies were displayed in the rooms.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the service. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play and outdoor play.
- Soothers were labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use. Staff members clearly described appropriate procedures for the management of mouthed toys and soothers, including washing the items in advance of sterilisation.
- The steps in the services nappy changing policy were observed to be followed when the children had their nappies changed.

Administration of Medication:

- No child attending any of the 3 sampled care rooms was observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years had access to and were observed sleeping in standard cots provided in either of the 2 sleep rooms.
- The temperature in the sleep rooms was monitored and recorded at the time of each sleep check and these rooms were maintained within the safe sleep temperature range of 16 - 20°C.
- Adequate space of at least 50cm was left between the cots and the stackable beds in the sleep 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

On the day of the inspection throughout the sampled care rooms in the service, the inspectors observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance, when both indoors and outdoors.