

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL119
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Name of Service:	Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre
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Address of Service:	Fortlawn Community Facility, Fortlawn Park, Clonsilla, Dublin 15, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sherene Powell
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	4
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15.
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford and Á Dunne
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

Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre is part time service located in an urban community setting. The service is registered to provide early childhood care and education to children aged between 2-6 years of age from 9am to 1pm and 2-6pm Monday to Friday. The service is also registered to provide a school age service; however, no school age children were present during the inspection. The service operates from two care rooms in a community facility. The Poppies room caters for children aged 3-4 years of age and the Daisies room provides care to children aged 4 to 6 years of age with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. Sanitary accommodation is accessed through the reception area of the community centre and the service has access to a public playground to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work directly with the children in the service and employs five staff who work with the children to include the person in charge, deputy person in charge and three childcare staff. On the day of the inspection there were four adults working directly with the children to include the deputy person in charge and three childcare staff. The deputy person in charge and the person in charge from another service facilitated 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

The unannounced inspection focused on an examination of compliance under The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

- Regulation 8 Notification of change in Circumstances, (1),
- Regulation 9 Management and recruitment (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(3),(4),
- Regulation 11 Staffing Levels (1)(2)(8)(a),
- Regulation 16 Record in relation to Pre-School Service (h), (i),(k),
- Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of Child (1)(a),
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and,
- Regulation 25 First Aid.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16 Record in relation to Pre-School Service. Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment and Regulation 11 Staffing levels were assessed in all care rooms.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action notice was issued to the service on the 19 September 2024 in relation to the following:

Regulation 23- Safeguarding, Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

- The outdoor area was not adequately secured to prevent an unsupervised child from exiting and an unauthorised adult from entering.
- No staff member with up to date First Aid Responder training or paediatric first aid was available to the children in the service.

On the 20 September 2024 the registered provider responded to the immediate action notice with the measures implemented within the service. Please see details in the body of the inspection report.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge from another service, the deputy person in charge staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
The service is currently registered to provide care and education to children from 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 6pm, however, on review of the children's attendance records it was observed that during the week of the 2 to 6 September 2024 a child attended the service from 9am to 2pm on the 2 September and from 9am to 1:30pm on the 4 September. This is at variance with the services registration status.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) In response to the non-compliance the registered provider has stated that this was addressed immediately and supporting documents were submitted to the inspectorate on the 2nd of October 2024. The service will continue to operate within the registered hours and ensure that parents adhere to pick up times always.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Documentary evidence of the service engagement with the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified.

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) The staff files of the registered provider, person in charge from another service, the person in charge, deputy person in charge and three childcare staff were reviewed.

(a)(b) Two validated written references were available for the seven staff members from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for seven staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d) International police vetting was available from seven countries in respect of seven staff members who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for more than 6 months as an adult.

(4) On review of documentation available seven staff members working with the children had evidence to demonstrate that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) On review of documentation relating to a new staff member, it was observed that the required procedures as outlined in (2)(c) were completed eight months before the commencement of employment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(3) To address the non-compliance the service has stated that the staff member was requested to carry out additional police vetting check. This was done immediately.

The service will continue to ensure that staff members from other countries have their police checks done as that has been the practice.

Supporting documentation submitted

(3) Documentary evidence of staff vetting completed on the 15 October 2024.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified.

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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) On the day of the inspection there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

Poppies room- 1 adult caring for 6 children aged 3 -5 years.

Daisies room- 3 adults caring for 4 children aged 3 -5 years.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff on the premises at all times as evidenced by staff rosters and sign in sheets available for inspection.

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;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) The details of the children attending the service to include their time of arrival and departure was recorded on an electronic application.
- (i) A staff roster was available to include the staff present in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(k) A sample of 29 accident and incidents records were reviewed on the service electronic application. Fourteen records did not have confirmation that the parent was made aware of the accident /incident and 4 records did not have confirmation that the manager of the service and the parent were aware of the accident/ incident.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(K) In response the registered provider has stated that a reminder message was sent to parents to have their children’s pending reports approved. Our online notification system is designed to notify parents automatically as soon as a report is made on their child. The manager is programmed on the system to receive automatic notifications once a report is made for approval.

The manager will continue to ensure that parents receive reminders about any pending report to be approved. The manager will ensure that this is ongoing to prevent any report being left unapproved by parents. The Manager must ensure that they attend to all notifications immediately they receive same without any delay.

Supporting documentation submitted

(k) Documentary evidence of corrective and preventive actions taken.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

A morning snack was provided by parents and consisted of sandwiches, crackers, yogurts, cheese and fruit. Water was available throughout the session and while the children played in the outdoor area. The atmosphere was calm and relaxed at snack time children sat together and were given plenty of time to enjoy their snack. Transitions within the service were managed appropriately, children were given plenty of notice to prepare for the next activity. Staff engaged with the children in their care throughout the inspection and were observed supporting children in their play, at mealtimes and when using the sanitary facilities.

Physical And Material Environment:

The care rooms were arranged into defined areas of interest including home corners, construction areas, a sensory table, library areas and arts and crafts area. Each area was resourced well with suitable play materials and equipment providing children with the freedom to play and explore. The materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Suitable child size furniture including tables and chairs were available for eating and tabletop activities.

Two outdoor areas were available to the children to consist of a larger space with wooden toys, grass, water trays, picnic benches, flower beds and plants. An inner area with a soft poured surface consisted of climbing frames, balance bridges, swings, slides, rope bridges, roundabouts and totem poles. All the children were observed to spend time in the outdoor play area at a designated time.

Supporting Relationships around Children:

Staff were available to the children to assist in activities and during transitions by using calm tones and clear instructions. The children responded to the staff by following directions and requesting additional support when required. Snack time was a sociable and relaxed event with the staff member in the Poppies room sitting and chatting with the children while supervising a child that played in the care room.

Strategies to engage and facilitate the children were observed such as using the child's name, repeating clear instructions and reinforcing the planned sequence of events. This enabled the children to become familiar with the daily routine and anticipate activities and transitions.

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:

- Entry into the community centre was managed by a reception staff member and exit was controlled by an electronic release system.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach in locked cupboards.
- Children's arrival and departure from the service was recorded in an electronic application.
- Pipes of the water heater were protected by foam in the sanitary facility.

Infection Control:

- The environment and care rooms were visually clean and maintained. Staff were observed engaging in cleaning duties following the departure of the children.
- Liquid soap, warm water and electric hand dryers were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate. The children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including following outdoor play, using the toilet and before meals.
- The children's food from home was stored in a refrigerator on arrival and removed at snack time.

Safe Sleep:

- A rest area consisting of soft matting was available should a child require a break from activities.

Fire Safety:

- An illuminated fire exit in the Poppies room was unobstructed and accessible if required.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. An Immediate Action notice was issued to the service on the 19 September 2024 in relation to the following:
The outdoor area was not adequately secured to prevent an unsupervised child from exiting and an unauthorised adult from entering.
2. A garda vetting disclosure for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice “EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting”.
3. The door from the Poppies room leading to the main reception was not secured, this increased the potential risk of children exiting the room unsupervised into other areas within the community centre.

Infection Control:

4. Soft matting present in the Daisies room was observed to be torn with exposed foam accessible to the children. This reduced the effective cleaning of the mats and increased the potential risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. On the 20 September 2024 the registered provider responded to the immediate action notice with the measures implemented within the service.
 - The outdoor area has been securely locked. An immediate action was taken to address this the 20 of September 2024 and photographic evidence of the three gates in the outdoor area secured with locks were provided.
 - The manager will ensure that a safety check is done and that all gates are securely locked prior to the children being brought to the playground. Playground check is part of our daily routine and staff members have been reminded to ensure that this is done unfailingly for the safety of the children.
2. In response the registered provider has stated that a re-vetting application was immediately submitted. The manager will ensure that staff members receive notification of re-vetting at least 8 weeks prior to the expiration of their current vetting disclosure.
3. To address the non-compliance an automatic door alarm has been fixed on the door leading to the main reception from Poppies room. The teachers must do a daily check to ensure that the door alarm is functionally well, and report to the manager immediately should they notice that the door alarm is malfunctioning. Manager will follow up continuously to ensure that all door alarm is functioning well.

Infection Control:

4. In response the mat was removed immediately, and a replacement mat has been provided. The adult in the room must report any material that is torn to the manager immediately so that a replacement will be provided without any delay. This manager will do a quick check in all the rooms to ensure that all materials in the room meet the required standard.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence of three gates in the outdoor area secured with locks.
2. Documentary evidence of re vetting for staff member dated 16 October 2024.
3. Photographic evidence of corrective actions.

Infection Control:

4. Photographic evidence of corrective action.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified.

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

(2)(a)(b)

A fully equipped first aid box was suitably equipped and available to the children while in the care rooms and outdoor area. The box was stored in a conspicuous position and accessible to staff.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
A staff member with up to date First Aid Responder training or paediatric first aid was not available to the children during the operation of the service. On the 19 September 2024 an immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)
On the 20 September 2024 the registered provider responded to the immediate action notice with the measures implemented within the service.

- Two staff members have undertaken Paediatric First Aid, certificates attached. The service shall email the certificate for a third staff member once it is completed.
- Currently 2 teachers are doing their FAR training which ends on the 26 October. As soon as we receive the FAR training certificates, we shall forward them to the inspector.
- The manager will ensure that regular checks are done on staff paperwork to ensure that staff are reminded to renew any document that needs to be renewed.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Paediatric first aid certificates for two staff members.

Summary Comment

The corrective action proposed will rectify the non-compliance identified. Regulatory compliance remains outstanding for Regulation (25)(1) as no certification to demonstrate that the FAR training course has been successfully completed was submitted to the inspector. A person trained to the FAR standard must be present on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

Non-Compliance Information

The service did not ensure that children were supervised while using the sanitary facilities in the main reception of the community centre. For example.

- At 11.30 am it was observed that one child was washing their hands in the sanitary facility and required assistance to turn on the tap, a staff member employed by the community centre entered the sanitary cubicle and assisted the child. This is at variance with the service Health and safety policy which states that appropriate procedures are to be taken to ensure children are always supervised indoors and outdoors.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In response to the non-compliance the registered provider has stated that management has reemphasised to all staff members the importance of preventing any contact between the community centre staff and the children from Hope Childcare. This has always been in place, and we have once again reaffirmed to staff members to ensure that this is adhered to always.

We will continue to ensure that non-Hope Childcare staff members do not have any direct contact with the children in the service at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of corrective action taken.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliance as identified.