

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL120
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Name of Service:	Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre
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Address of Service:	Mountview Youth & Community Centre, Lohunda Downs, Clonsilla, Dublin 15.
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sherene Powell
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	C. Harte and T. Nelson
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 a full day care service based in an urban area. The service is located within the Mountainview Youth and Community Centre and consists of two care rooms with two separate dedicated sanitary areas for the children's use. On the day of inspection one care room during the morning was operating as a specialised Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) class. The service operates between 8:00am - 6:00pm catering to children between the ages of 2-6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) between. The service has access to an enclosed outdoor area with a soft surface located at the side of the community centre. The service is one of five early years services operated by the registered provider. The service also offers a registered school age childcare service.

Staffing

The registered provider currently employs seven staff to work in the service including the director of education, person in charge, four early years professionals who work directly with the preschool children and one auxiliary staff member who assists with meal preparation and cleaning duties. The registered provider attended the service on the day of inspection for the feedback meeting following 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 Management and Recruitment and Regulation 16 Record in Relation to a Preschool service.

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 registered provider on 12th May 2025 in relation to concerns identified under Regulation 23, Safeguarding the Health, Welfare and Development of child. A response which adequately addressed the concern was received on 13th May 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, director of education, 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,

(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

(1)

- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise if required.
- (b) A review of the staff roster and discussion with management demonstrated that a designated person in charge was rostered to be on the premises the week of the inspection for the duration of the opening hours of the service. The person in charge was present in the service when the inspectors arrived.

(2) A review of paperwork and discussion with management confirmed there are currently 7 staff employed by the registered provider to work in the service. The files of one staff member employed since the last inspection along with the Garda vetting disclosures of two existing staff members were reviewed. The registered provider had completed the following checks:

- (a) Two written and validated references were available from past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 3 staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was available for 1 adult who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.

(3) Evidence was available to show that the procedures required under (2) has been completed prior to the start date of one staff member.

(4) The file reviewed did not include a relevant qualification as management confirmed this staff member does not work directly with the Early Years children attending.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(2) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. The director of education was present to assist in the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not ensure an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children throughout the morning of the inspection. The staff available were unable to respond adequately to the care needs of the children and provide adequate supervision. This is detailed under the non-compliance section of Regulation 19.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) On the morning of the inspection adult child ratios were fully in line with requirements. We also acknowledge that, during the inspection, some of the children were experiencing sensory overload, which resulted in moments of dysregulation. To ensure consistent high-quality care and supervision, we will continue with the high-quality training, we have in place for our staff. We have a contingency plan in place to provide extra support during staff transitions, such as deploying senior staff members to assist as needed. Regular reviews of staff capacity and workload are conducted to identify and address any gaps proactively, maintaining compliance with regulatory adult-to-child ratios and supporting the wellbeing of both children and staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Staff training record.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under Regulation 11.

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;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) Attendance records detailing the arrival and departure of the children on a daily basis were maintained.
 - (i) A service roster was available that was reflective of the staff present on the day of the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

- (j) The registered provider did not ensure a full record in writing was maintained for the administration of medication. This posed a potential risk of miscommunication impacting the safe administration of medication. A sample of 8 records were reviewed and 7 were observed incomplete.
- Three records did not include a parent’s signature confirming they had been informed of the administration or the signature of the staff member who witnessed the administration of medication.
 - Four records did not include the full details of the child who received the medication.
- (k) The registered provider did not ensure a full record in writing was maintained for accidents and incidents. This posed a potential risk of miscommunication impacting the appropriate care of children after an injury. sample of 10 records were reviewed and 7 were observed incomplete.
- Six records did not include a parent’s signature confirming they had been informed of the incident.
 - One record did not include a parent’s signature or the mangers signature.

This is not in line with service policy.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (j) The administration of medication procedure is fully embedded in daily practice and is included in our daily checklist for the person in charge to review at the end of each day. Medication administration is included in our daily checklist and reviewed by the person in charge. Completed forms are reviewed and signed off each day by the room leader or manager to confirm accuracy and completeness.
- (k) To ensure continued accuracy and clear communication, the person in charge will continue to remind parents of the importance of reviewing and signing their child’s incident report upon receipt. In addition to notifications through an online system, staff inform parents verbally at collection time if any incidents or accidents have occurred and remind them that the completed report is available for their review and confirmation. The practice of completing reports promptly and notifying parents immediately is well embedded in daily procedures.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Daily checklist for person in charge.
- Staff training record.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under Regulation 16.

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)

- Staff in the sunflower room described how they use visual cards to support children in their daily routine. It was observed that each staff member in the room wore a group of visual aid cards on their person throughout interactions with the children. These were observed in use during one-to-one activity time.
- Staff explained how daily conversations take place with parents and how a software application is used to share updates on the children's day.
- Hot meals are provided by an external company to the service and a weekly menu was displayed in the reception area.
- Drinks were available in the care rooms. Staff were observed to bring children's drinks to the hall during playtime and children were encouraged to drink during mealtimes.
- Toys and resources were observed on low level shelving in care rooms accessible to children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

1. Children's needs were not met during a transition for toileting which was poorly managed leading to upset and frustration for children.

- Both classrooms were brought to the sanitary area following playtime in the hall. This resulted in the children queuing in narrow hallway waiting to access the sanitary facilities.
- A child was observed to enter the storage room and needed to be removed by a staff member.
- Children were observed pushing their peers repeatedly as they waited.
- Despite staff being present the experience was loud and disorganised for the children resulting in children showing discomfort and frustration by behaviours such as crying or placing their fingers in their ears.

Care practices and transitions should be managed effectively in a supportive manner to meet children's needs and to reduce negative experiences. This practice is not in line with service policy that advises children will be supported to remove themselves from situations where they are feeling frustration and staff will support creating conditions that minimises conflict between children.

2. Children's needs were not met during mealtime in the Jasmine room. The mealtime was not a relaxed and enjoyable experience for the children present. The following was observed:

- Children were observed to take and eat their peer's food unnoticed by staff which led to frustration for a child.
- Children were positioned at furniture that was not suitably sized for their comfort as it reached chest and neck height.

It is acknowledged that one staff member was sitting with a child who required support during this time and was therefore unable to support the needs of the other children and attempted to give direction to a second staff member who needed instruction.

3. The registered provider did not ensure that varied and sufficient food was available for children attending full time care.

- A child who did not like the main meal was not offered a suitable alternative meal but was instead given a bread-based snack.
- A second child who did not eat the main meal had a bread type snack from home that was repeatedly taken by their peers.

This is not in line with the Food and Nutrition Standards for hot meal provision which outlines that every hot meal should contain a number of specific food groups. It is acknowledged that some children may

have food preferences however the availability and presence of a suitable alternative hot meal can encourage children's healthy eating habits.

Programme of activities:

4. The programme of activities in the Jasmine room was poorly managed and did not actively engage the children. This was evidenced by the following:

- Children who did not wish to take part in graduation preparation or circle time did not have an alternative activity made available to them.
- Following mealtime there was no activity set up for the children to engage with as they waited to be brought for sleep or for those who remained awake.
- There was no evidence of a displayed routine in the room as guidance for staff or children.

Alternative activities prepared in advance in line with an age-appropriate routine can provide engagement for all children. It is acknowledged that a staff member attempted to provide some activities however they were regularly disrupted by attending to individual children's needs or to provide guidance to another staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. To manage this effectively, we have a daily toileting schedule that follows outdoor playtime. This schedule is designed to prevent overcrowding and ensure the safety and well-being of all children during transitions. Staff members have completed refresher training focused on supporting smooth transitions and fostering positive, supportive interactions, in line with our service policies. Supervision in transition areas remains active to promptly address any unsafe behaviour and support children showing signs of distress. Regular refresher training on effective transition management and positive interactions, will continue to be provided to all staff in line with service policy.
2. The table in the Jasmine Room is an adjustable type and has been re-adjusted to better support children's comfort and independence during activities and mealtimes. To prevent discomfort and support children's independence, the adjustable furniture in the Jasmine room will be regularly checked and re-adjusted as needed. Staffing ratios and supervision levels during mealtimes will continue to be reviewed and support provided as needed.

3. We will continue to ensure that a varied and sufficient menu is provided, including suitable alternative hot meals for children who do not eat the main meal. Staff have been instructed to follow a clear procedure for offering an alternative hot meal, rather than fruit or bread-based snacks. This procedure will be followed consistently, regardless of whether the child accepts the alternative meal, to ensure compliance with nutritional standards and promote healthy eating habits. Ongoing monitoring to ensure staff consistently adhere to the procedure, promoting compliance with nutritional standards and supporting healthy eating habits.
4. Staff have been reminded of the importance to always put up the daily schedule, especially on mornings when the room needs to be set up after being cleared the previous day or over the weekend. Staff also receive ongoing support and training to plan inclusive activities with appropriate alternatives, ensuring that quiet and engaging options are consistently available for all children after mealtimes. To make sure this step is never missed, it has now been added to the morning checklist for the person in charge to verify each day.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Staff training record.
- Photographic evidence.
- Person in charge daily checklist.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under Regulation 19.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The care rooms doors were secure with key code and fob activated mechanisms to restrict entry and help prevent a child from exiting the room unsupervised.

- A child's lunch from home contained sliced grapes in line with HSE and Tusla guidelines to help reduce a choking hazard.
- Toys and resources were observed in good condition and suitable for use.
- No trailing flexes were observed.
- Staff were observed to bring a first aid box to the community centre hall during the children's play time.
- The outdoor play area was fully secured with fencing and had a level surface of synthetic grass.

Infection Control:

- A cleaning checklist was observed completed up to date in the Sunflower room.
- Foot pedal operated bins were observed in the sanitary areas.

Safe Sleep:

- Children's bed linen was observed stored in sealable individually labelled bags.
- Staff were observed to physically check sleeping children at 10-minute intervals and a record of these checks was maintained.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Water temperature in a sanitary area used by the children was not thermostatically controlled and exceed 50°C posing a potential risk of scalding. At 11.06am the water temperature of the sink in the sanitary area was 53.3°C. An immediate action notice was issued.
2. Children were observed playing in the community centre hall on the day of inspection. The hall door was a swing door which led into the community centre reception and main exit door leading to the car park. The hall door was not observed to be secure on the day posing a potential risk of a child exiting unsupervised.
3. A storage room located by the sanitary area contained cleaning agents stored on low level shelving was observed with the door open making the room accessible. A child was observed entering this room on the day of inspection. This posed a potential risk of accidental poisoning.
4. Football nets present in the hall posed a potential risk of injury. A child was observed to climb behind the nets resulting in their foot becoming stuck in the netting.
5. Children in the Jasmine room were observed to eat their peers' lunch from home this went unnoticed by staff. This posed a potential risk in the event of an allergy.

Infection Control:

6. Children in the Jasmine room were not supported to wash their hands prior to dinner which posed an infection control risk.

Safe Sleep:

- The recommended ambient sleep temperature between 18-22°C was not maintained in a room where children over one year old were sleeping. At 1.54pm the temperature in the room was recorded at 23.3°C posing a potential risk to children's safety.

Fire Safety:

- Staff in the Jasmine room did not bring the attendance record to the community centre hall during the children's play time. This posed a potential risk of hindering safe evacuation of the premises in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- The water temperature in the affected sanitary area was immediately addressed as a priority. A thermostatic mixing valve was installed to regulate the temperature safely. Temperature checks remain part of our daily health and safety checklist and will continue to be conducted to ensure the water temperature remains within safe limits. Staff will carry out these checks daily and promptly report any irregularities to prevent recurrence.
- Staff members are assigned to be stationed at the door during all hall activities to maintain active supervision and ensure the door remains secure at all times. Clear responsibilities have been assigned for door monitoring, and regular reminders will be given during staff meetings. Ongoing spot checks by the person in charge will ensure the door remains secure and supervision is consistently maintained.
- The storage room is kept locked at all times, with no exceptions. A clear sign has been placed on the door to remind staff of this requirement. All staff will receive periodic reminders about the importance of keeping the storage room locked. Regular spot checks will be carried out by the person in charge to ensure the door remains secured. Also, responsibilities around storage room security have been clearly outlined in staff training to reinforce safe practices.

4. Supervision during hall activities continues to be actively reinforced, with staff consistently monitoring all areas to ensure children do not access or misuse equipment. To prevent future safety risks during hall time, staff have been assigned clear supervision zones to ensure full visibility of all areas and equipment. A pre-use hall inspection is in place before each session to identify and remove any unsuitable or unsafe equipment. Ongoing staff training will reinforce safe equipment use and supervision protocols, ensuring children can play safely and confidently.
5. Staff members are actively supervising the children during mealtimes to prevent food sharing, thereby reducing the risk of allergic reactions. This supervision protocol is consistently reinforced on a daily basis to ensure the health and safety of all children. Visual reminders highlighting food allergies and staff supervision responsibilities are clearly displayed in the classrooms to support ongoing awareness and vigilance.

Infection Control:

6. As part of our ongoing commitment to children's health and wellbeing, staff actively support and supervise children's handwashing routines before mealtimes to help reduce the risk of infection. To help prevent lapses in hygiene practices, visual cues and handwashing posters are displayed in the classroom and sanitary areas to reinforce the routine for both children and staff. Additionally, handwashing is included in regular room audits to ensure it remains a consistent and embedded part of daily practice.

Safe Sleep:

7. A safe air conditioner is available for use when necessary to support appropriate temperature regulation in the sleep room. Room temperature is regularly recorded during sleep times and is monitored as part of the daily health and safety checklist to ensure the environment remains within the recommended range, maintaining a safe and comfortable space for all children. A temperature monitoring log is maintained and reviewed daily by the person in charge to promptly identify and address any deviations.

Fire Safety:

8. As part of our established safety procedures, staff consistently bring the attendance record when moving children to different areas, including the hall. To reinforce this routine, it remains part of our daily checklist, and the person in charge continues to verify compliance through regular safety checks to maintain consistency and best practice. A visual reminder is placed at the room exit to prompt staff to take the attendance record before leaving with the children. To further support this safety measure,

regular spot checks will be carried out by the person in charge to ensure ongoing compliance with this established protocol.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence.
- Staff training record.
- Person in charge daily checklist.

Infection Control:

- Person in charge daily checklist.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff training record.
- Person in charge daily checklist.

Fire Safety:

- Staff training record.
- Person in charge daily checklist.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under Regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-
- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and
 - (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

- (1) A review of the staff roster indicated that a person qualified in First Aid Responder (FAR) was rostered to be on the premises during the operational hours of the service for the week of the inspection.
- (2) (a)(b) An adequately equipped first aid box was available and easily accessible to staff if required and was stored out of reach of children.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1) There was a complaints policy maintained that outlined the following:
- (a) The procedure to be followed when making a complaint.
 - (b) The way complaints would be dealt with.

(c) The procedures for keeping the complainant informed on how the complaint is being dealt with.

(2) (a) The registered provider ensured there was a process in place to record complaints.

(b) This was maintained in line with service policy.