

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL275		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Snowdrops Crèche & Montessori		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	29 Clonuske Park, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin		
<b>Eircode:</b>	K32 Y012		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Pamela Ericson		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	04/09/2023		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	21	PM 13
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	AM Coyle & S Cully		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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).			
<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable		

### Description of service

Snowdrops Creche & Montessori is located in a converted domestic dwelling in a residential area of Balbriggan, north Dublin. The service provides full time, part time and sessional pre-school care and education to children from 6 months until they commence attendance at primary school. There are 4 care rooms in the service namely the Baby room (6-12 months), Wobbler room (1-2 years), Toddler room (2-3 years) and the Montessori room (3-4 years). The Baby room was not operational on the day of inspection. Two sleep rooms are available in the service one sleep room is located directly off the Baby room and a second sleep room is situated directly adjacent to the dining room. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) and operates from 07:30am-6pm Monday to Friday.

### Staffing

There are 11 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider, nine staff work directly with the children. One staff member is employed to participate in catering duties and one staff member assists with housekeeping duties.

### 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 and safety. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 record of a 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 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
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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 when required.

(b) The service manager was present in the service when the inspectors arrived and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b) Two written, validated references were available for the registered provider and for the 10 staff members employed in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and for the 10 staff members.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 3 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Nine staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service each held appropriate childcare qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

## Non-Compliance Information

(d) International police vetting that was available for one staff member was not translated and therefore could not be interpreted.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective Action

(d) Registered provider has sent the police vetting to a company to have it translated.

### Preventive Action

(d) Ensure all non-Irish police vetting is translated for future employees.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Translated police vetting for one staff member.

## Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been reviewed and accepted.

### 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 to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- The Baby room was closed on the day of inspection.
- In the Wobbler room there were 4 children aged 1 year 4 months to 1 year 6 months being cared for by 1 adult.
- In the Toddler room there were 4 children aged 2 years 3 months to 2 years 6 months being cared for by 1 adult.
- In the Montessori room there were 13 children aged 3 years 10 months to 4 years 2 months being cared for by 3 adults.

(8) (a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times. This was confirmed by the staff roster.

### 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.*

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 10 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors.

### 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 during the inspection:

#### Basic needs:

- The children were observed to be familiar and comfortable with the staff, the daily routine and within their environment. Older children called staff by name, and younger children sought out staff when they needed support. Children were observed to move freely, to make independent choices about play and have their interests responded to in conversation or through the provision of materials. This creates an atmosphere where children feel safe and secure.
- Mealtimes were observed to be relaxed and sociable. The service provided breakfast, snacks and meals for the children, however, the children attending Montessori brought their own morning snacks. The staff members sat with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat and provided assistance as required. The staff members sat in front of the younger children who were fed in highchairs warmly engaging with the children at their eye level.
- Children's nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as needed. During nappy changes, staff were observed to engage children in easy conversation or narrate their actions. In the Toddler room, a child was being toilet trained and was being gently supported to do so by the early year's practitioner. Older children used the toilet independently with support provide when required and reminders given about handwashing.
- Children's sleep and rest needs were being met. Children were placed to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness, and this was evidenced in the Wobbler room when a child exhibited signs of tiredness prior to dinner being served. The child was placed to sleep and provided with dinner after waking. Children in the Toddler room took a nap after lunch on stackable beds with bedlinen provided for each child. In the Montessori room, there was a child-sized sofa where children could rest if needed.

- All children spent time in the garden on the day of the inspection where they had access to equipment that supported the development of gross motor, sensory and imaginary play skills.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- Throughout the service staff were observed to interact with children in a nurturing, sensitive and warm manner. Staff demonstrated their familiarity with the children by talking with the inspectors about their observations of the children, interests, personalities or developmental stages.
- The staff team was observed to communicate well with each other regarding children's needs, routines or updates from parents. This supports provision of consistent care. For example, in the Montessori room children had recently begun their new preschool year and the staff communicated with each other frequently about plans for the day, how to settle in new children, materials to add to the room etc.
- There was evidence of partnership with parents. The staff member in the Wobbler room completes a record on a daily basis detailing the children's food intake, nappy changes sleep and the activities which is shared with parents when collecting their children from the service. In the Toddler room, the staff spoke about how they work with parents when children begin toilet training. In the Montessori room, the staff took time to contact a parent to let them know their child had settled and was playing with friends after they had been upset in the morning.

### Physical and material environment:

- In all care room, the materials and play resources provided were available on low-level shelves allowing children easy access to resources and facilitating independent choice of materials.
- With exception to the non-compliance below, the care rooms had suitable, stable and age-appropriate furniture such as tables, chairs, play kitchens, and child-sized sofas which add to meaningful play experiences and support independence.
- The Toddler room and Montessori room were laid out well and had identifiable areas of interest including home corners, tabletop activities, reading areas and transport and construction play areas. The Montessori room also had a very well-resourced art area with the provision of natural materials, color-coordinated art materials and a light table. They also provided a writing area and maths table to support early numeracy and literacy skills.

- The outdoor area was resourced with a variety of equipment and materials. The main area was covered with an impact-absorbing surface. Here, children had access to 2 climbing frames with slides, ride-a-long bikes, cars and scooters and a sensory play area with an outdoor kitchen and sand and water trays. There was also a sheltered play area which was covered with artificial grass where children had access to a well-resourced home corner, large transport cars and garages, and large plastic building blocks. This area could be fully enclosed by the use of a sliding wooden gate so that 2 groups of children could use the garden but have their own play space.

### Non-Compliance Information

- The Wobbler room did not have defined areas of interest to support a variety of play experiences for the children. The kitchen area that was provided in the Wobbler room did not have any materials available for the children to extend their play.
- There was no low-level table or chairs available in the Wobbler room for the children to sit at to participate in activities.
- The books that were available to the children in the Wobbler room were torn and in poor condition.
- The family walls and birthday walls in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms were displayed above the children's eye level. The positioning of the photographs did not easily enable the children to use the photographs as a means of maintaining links and bridging the gap between the service and home.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

- & 2. The Wobbler room is undergoing a complete makeover. Registered provider is going to model it on their new Reggio style pre-school room which was completed during the summer. The room will have defined areas of interest, including a sensory light table a low-level table and chairs and a more natural based play environment.
- Books were replaced with new books.
- Family wall pictures have been lowered and laminated so the children can see them at their level.

### **Preventive Action**

1. & 2. Regular reflection on rooms measured against Siolta Standards to ensure service is meeting the needs of the children. Review rooms formally quarterly as well as regular revision with staff in the room to make sure the environment is meeting the children's needs.
3. Due to the age group of the children the books do get torn and damaged very often, the children in this group love their books and use them all throughout the day. Staff does rotate books regularly, but they will do it more regularly going forward.
4. When renovation of room is complete ensure the family wall pictures remain at child's level.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographs of resources for the Wobbler room

Photograph of planned resources for the 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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Windows in the care rooms located on the first floor were fitted with safety latches.
- There were blinds fitted in the first-floor care rooms to alleviate harsh direct sunlight.

### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- There was a lined, lidded, and pedal-operated bin in the sanitary accommodation where nappy changing took place.
- The windows in the preschool rooms were open to facilitate the circulation of air.
- With the exception of the non-compliance identified below, the children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after the use of the toilet, and on return from the garden.

### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

### Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years had access to a standard cot to sleep in.

### Fire Safety:

- The records demonstrated that fire drills were practiced on a regular basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. The side gate to the service was closed but not locked meaning that a person could enter the outdoor area to the rear of the service. It is acknowledged that a low-level barrier was in place in the outdoor area preventing the children from accessing the path leading to the side gate.

### Infection Control:

2. The children attending the Wobbler room did not have their hands washed after they had their nappies changed or before they ate. Their hands were cleaned with baby wipes.
3. The children from the wobbler room had their morning snack placed directly onto the highchair tray, children's food and snacks should be placed in a bowl or on a plate.
4. There was a build-up of dust and residue in the crevices of the nappy changing table in the Toddler room. This poses a risk of cross-contamination.
5. In the Toddler room there were 5 loose soothers stored in children's baskets without lidded storage tubs. On discussion with the staff member, she explained that she washed the soothers daily with hot soapy water but did not use a steriliser. Storing soothers in labelled lidded tubs and using a soother steriliser reduces the risk of cross-contamination and the spread of infectious illnesses.

### Administration of Medication:

- The administration of medication forms were not signed by the children's parents when they collected the children from the service as a means of ensuring that the parents were aware that their child had medication administered whilst they were attending the service.

### Safe Sleep:

- A child's sleep check was observed not to be recorded in a timely manner. The child was placed to sleep at 11:20am and the sleep check record was commenced at 11:50am. Sleep checks must be conducted and recorded at 10-minute intervals on all sleeping children.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

##### General Safety:

- Side gate to remain locked throughout the day. Staff lock door when they enter the garden. Message sent to staff about new procedure of locking side gate when they are using the garden.

##### Infection Control:

- Staff were reminded of nappy changing policy of hand washing.
- Childrens snacks are to be put on plates and not directly on highchair table. Staff have been informed of this.
- The changing areas received a deep clean and staff were notified to ensure that these areas are checked daily and cleaned to avoid a build-up of dust.
- All old soothers were thrown out.

### Administration of Medication:

- New administering of medicine booklet ordered with section on it for parents to sign. Staff informed of new record sheet and the importance of getting a parents signature every evening on collect if medicine administered.

### Safe Sleep:

- Sleep sheet template has been amended to include earlier times for recording sleep.

#### Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

- Manager to check regularly that staff are following instructions with regard to locking gate.

## **Infection Control:**

2. As part of the wobbler room makeover registered provider will be putting in a sink into the room to make it easier for staff to wash the children's hands after garden time and before mealtimes.
3. Kitchen staff to ensure there is always plates available for wobbler snacks.
4. Staff to put on cleaning check list to ensure this area is not forgotten.
5. Soothers from toddler room are to be brought down at the end of each week and sterilised in the sterilising machine in the kitchen.

## **Administration of Medication:**

6. Managers to check record book daily as part of their safety checklist to ensure staff are getting parents signatures.

## **Safe Sleep:**

7. Even though staff did do visual checks on the child it was highlighted to all staff that they need to be recorded on the sheet too. The new template will ensure if a child goes to bed earlier in the morning that the sleep checks can be recorded.

## **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photograph of Medication administration book.

## **Summary Comment**

The non-compliances identified under this Regulation on inspection have been adequately addressed.

## 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 all fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated that the most recent fire drill was conducted on 08/08/2023.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in March 2023 and smoke alarms were serviced on the 01/06/2023.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.