

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015GY149
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Stars Creche & Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Cappagh Road, Knocknacarra, Barna, Co. Galway
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<b>Eircode:</b>	H91 T6D9
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Audrey Hogan, Cathy Quine
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	24/07/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	26	PM	26
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	F. Nic Dhonnacha
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector

### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

The pre-school service is in a detached ground floor premises, on the outskirts of Knocknacarra, on the west side of Galway city. The service operates a full day care service from 8.00hrs to 18.00hrs. It caters for children aged between 0 and 6 years. There are four playrooms: namely the Baby room, (for Wobbler children aged 1 to 2 years), the Toddler room, (for Toddlers children aged 2 to 3 years), and Montessori 1 room- The Den (for children attending Early Childhood Care and Education pre-school care programme aged 4 to 5 years) and the Full time Montessori room/school aged children's room (for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education pre-school care programme in the morning and for the school aged children's afterschool programme in the afternoons and during holidays). There are two designated sleep rooms with seven cots for younger children's sleep provision and stackable beds are available for older children's sleep provision. There is a designated kitchen where the snacks and main meals are prepared, cooked and stored on site. There is a large outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

One of two registered providers works in the service daily. There are 10 staff including the registered provider working in the preschool this includes 7 staff who work directly with the preschool children, the kitchen cook and two staff working with the school aged children. Seven staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. These staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education.

### 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 inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 9 and 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, an immediate action notice was issued, as one staff member working directly with the children, did not have the required Garda Síochána vetting disclosure.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, the registered provider advised how the one staff member would not be working with children, until the vetting disclosure application was completed.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, the registered provider sent a copy of the garda vetting disclosure certificate to the early years inspectorate.

### Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes 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.

(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) There was a designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

The registered provider and deputy person in charge were on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

(b) Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.

(2) Ten staff files including the registered provider, cook and two school age staff files were reviewed.

One of the registered providers works in the preschool service and is onsite daily.

(a) Eighteen of 20 validated references on file were from a past employer.

(b) Two of 20 validated references on file were from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 9 of 10 staff. 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) One of two adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for longer than 6 consecutive months required police vetting which was available on the day of inspection.

The second adult had police vetting available for 1 of 4 different states she lived and worked in outside of this state while over the age of 18 years.

- (4) Seven staff members working directly with the pre-school children had evidence of a childcare qualification to at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (2)(c) One of the 10 staff working in the service did not have the required Garda Síochána vetting disclosure. It was acknowledged that an application had been made to the vetting bureau, but no disclosure had been obtained on the day of inspection. An immediate action notice was issued, for one staff who was working directly with the children.

- (d) One of 2 adults who lived and worked outside the state for longer than 6 months while over the age of 18 did not have the required international child protection certificate/police vetting for 3 of those 4 states.

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

On the 26/08/2025 the registered provider advised of the following.

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

2(c) Garda vetting disclosure has been obtained for the staff member. The registered provider advised that no staff would commence employment in the future until the required garda vetting disclosure has been obtained.

2(d) The service will ensure all staff files are reviewed and police vetting will be obtained for staff who worked in other states for longer than 6 months while over the age of eighteen years of age before employment commences.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

On the 28/07/2025 garda vetting disclosure for one adult was submitted.

A copy of police vetting for one of the three states requested was submitted to the office of the early year's inspectorate.

### Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider address the non-compliance at Regulation 9 2(c).

The findings documented at point 2(d) remains outstanding as the police vetting has been obtained for one of three states so far, it is acknowledged that the process is ongoing for the remaining two states.

### 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) From review of the staff roster and discussion with the person in charge the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service.

(2) On the morning of the inspection, there were 26 children present.

- 4 children were aged 14 months to 24 months (1 to 2 years of age),
- 5 children were aged between 2 to 3 years,
- 10 children were aged between 3 to 4 years,
- 7 children were aged between 4 to 5 years.

There were seven staff directly caring for these children this include the registered provider and person in charge (manager). Additionally, there was a cook and two staff who were working with the school age children's summer camp programme.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises while the pre-school service was operating.

### 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*

*(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*

*(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

- The staff arranged appropriate activities throughout the day to meet the children's needs. Most of the children's time was spent playing outdoors during the inspection in the well-developed outdoor area that had a diverse range of play equipment. The children had free choice of play activities outdoors with numerous opportunities for messy play provided.
- Some of the children from the Montessori playroom and The Den were observed jumping through tyres, balancing on balance beams, some children were chasing each other and hiding behind the trees.
- Children were observed to use the selection of ride on toys provided and use the tree swings while others played in the tipis. The children were supervised by the staff while in the outdoor and indoor play areas.
- The playrooms were well resourced and arranged in similar defined interest areas with home corners, construction areas, dress up areas and transport areas provided in the rooms. Toys and play equipment were suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children using them. The play equipment was stored and displayed at low levels to allow children to look at them and choose their preferred play activities and replace them after use depending on their developmental stage.
- Meals and snacks were appropriately spaced out on the day. The children enjoyed their snacks in the outdoor play area and returned to the playrooms for their dinner. All snacks and main meals were provided by the service and prepared, cooked, served and stored by the cook onsite. The staff sat with the children when they ate chatting to them whilst supervising them. Individual drink containers were available during the day to the children in case they were thirsty and wanted a drink during activities.

- The interactions between staff and children were observed to be warm and positive with the staff showing familiarity with the children they cared for. There was evidence of key worker systems in place and the staff advised the inspector that parents were aware of their child's keyworker.
- Staff members were observed to speak with parents/guardians telling them about their child's day in the service at drop off and collection times at the side gate to the outdoor area and inside the premises. The staff told the inspector that an electronic application was used to help communicate with parents including weekly playroom activity updates with photographs sent out to update parents. Other communication methods included electronic systems to send private messages to parents, if needed. Staff from the Toddler playroom showed the inspector an example of scrapbooks that had been made for each child with themes, artwork and observations. The theme of the week was 'The Galway Races'.

(b)

- Provisions were in place to change children's clothes if needed with spare changes of clothes for children available. One child was observed to need their clothing changed following playing outside and a staff member discreetly helped them to change their clothes chatting to them throughout using age appropriate language.
- The children in the older playrooms were toilet trained and were supported and encouraged to use the toilet independently at any time with the staff within earshot if help was needed.
- There was a schedule for nappy changing in the toddler room. Children who required nappy changing were brought by a staff member while a relief staff member stayed with the remaining children. Nappy changing followed good practice in communication with children and hygiene practices.
- Children were given the opportunity to rest or sleep at structured times during the day with rest areas containing soft seating also available in the playrooms if children wanted to sit down and relax at any time. There were two designated sleep rooms with cots available for the children under two years of age. Stackable beds were available if the older children were tired and required a sleep.
- Before dinnertime the staff in each of the playrooms encouraged the children to line up to wash their hands. The children washed and dried their own hands supervised by the staff to ensure their hands were thoroughly cleaned.
- The outdoor play area to the rear of the premises was sufficiently spacious to accommodate the numbers of children attending the service. The outdoor play environment provided activities and opportunities for fresh air, exercise and discovery.

## 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 door into the pre-school was secure to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- The external outdoor play areas were secured by fencing, boundary walls and gates so that unauthorised persons could not access or enter the area or children could not exit unsupervised.
- The doors into the kitchen, office and adult only sanitary room had a system of security.
- All cleaning agents and equipment were inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Blinds cords were secured by fasteners and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.
- The boiler and oil tank were fenced off in the outdoor area to prevent children accessing them.

##### Infection Control:

- The designated nappy changing area with two changing units was clean and the changing mats were intact.
- The children's belongings for nappy changing were individually labelled. The children's barrier creams were clearly individually labelled and stored within their designated nappy changing area.
- The playrooms were observed to be kept adequately ventilated with the windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels.
- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playrooms and the outdoor play area.

##### Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored inaccessible to the pre-school children.

- Staff advised suncreams were checked on an annual basis, each bottle was individual labelled and a date of expiry was noted.

### Safe Sleep:

- There were two designated sleep rooms adjacent to the Baby room Sleep room 1 which had three cots and Sleep room 2 which had four cots for sleep provision for children under two years of age. Additionally, there were stackable beds available for older children's sleep provision if required.
- Children were observed sleeping on demand following cues and signs of tiredness.
- Older children had designated relaxation and chill out time.
- The service had safe and comfortable spaces for the younger toddlers to lie, roll, crawl, explore and to be protected from children who were more mobile.
- A thermometer was available in the sleep rooms and used as the method of recording the sleep room temperature. The room temperatures were maintained between 16 °C and 20 °C.
- The children's designated linen and blankets were stored onsite in a secure press in designated sleep room 1.

### Fire Safety:

- The fire doors were unobstructed on the day of inspection.
- The staff and children practiced fire drills monthly and records were maintained.

### Outing:

- No outings were carried out on the day of inspection.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for eight staff. However, one staff vetting disclosure 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'.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

On the 26/08/2025 and 3/09/2025 the registered provider advised of the following.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

A Garda vetting application was made for the staff member who's vetting disclosure was not dated within the past three years. The service will ensure all staff vetting's will be obtained on time in order to keep up to date with the recommended time frames. (every three years).

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

#### **General Safety:**

A copy of an email from the national vetting bureau highlighting a garda vetting disclosure dated 20/08/2025 was sent to Child and Family Agency.

### **Summary Comment**

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 General Safety has been adequately addressed.

## 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) The service provided evidence that a person trained in first aid for children, was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. Two staff were certified in the First Aid Responder course.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box available for each playroom with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and placed in a conspicuous position.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes were fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service.

### 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2025.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type, and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated February 2025.
- The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2025.
- (4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

*A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.*

#### Compliance Information

- The preschool service provided a record of adequate insurance, catering for 47 children at any one time, with an expiry date of 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2026. The insurance covered:
- public liability,
  - personal accident,
  - against fire and theft,
  - buildings,
  - outings undertaken as part of the service provision.