

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY150
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Name of Service:	Little Stars Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	An Fuarán, Moycullen, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 V634
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Name of Registered Provider:	Audrey Hogan & Cathy Quine
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Service type:	Full day care
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Date of Inspection:	26/03/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	65	PM	41
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla - Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A- (1st Floor-Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
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Inspection undertaken by:	F. Nic Dhonnacha
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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	N/A
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Description of service

This privately operated pre-school service is in the village of Moycullen, west county Galway. The pre-school caters for children aged between 0 months and 6 years, from Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 6.00pm. The pre-school offers the option of full day-care, part-time care, an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from 9.00am to 12.00pm and a sessional care programme. Additionally, an afterschool programme from 1.30pm to 6.00pm is offered, for school aged children. A play based preschool curriculum focusing on emerging themes and interests is provided with elements of Montessori. This pre-school service consists of four childcare playrooms namely the Toddler/Playgroup room which was subdivided into two sections (Playgroup 1- age range of the children 1- 2 years of age) and (Playgroup 2- age range of the children 2- 3 years of age), located on the ground floor. The full day Senior Montessori room (age range of the children was 3 years to 6 years), Junior Montessori room (age range of the children was 3 years to 4 years) and part-time Montessori room (the age range of the children 3 years to 5 years). The afterschool programme is located in this room after the morning session finishes. These rooms are located on the first floor of the premises. The service has two designated sleep rooms namely Sleep room 1 with three cots and Sleep room 2 with four cots. Twelve stackable beds are available for older children requiring sleep provision. Quiet rest areas are available in each of the playrooms for children to rest and relax. The service has its own kitchen, where children’s meals and snacks are prepared, cooked, and stored on site. To the rear of the main building, there are secure outdoor play areas for children’s play, exploration, and activities.

Staffing

The registered provider is not on site on a daily basis. There are fourteen adults in total working in the preschool service. There is two named persons in charge and a named designated deputy. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going training and education. Twelve staff hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. Additionally, one cook was designated to kitchen duties, preparing, cooking, and serving the service meals. An additional staff member was assigned as relief and provides support under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIMS).

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 Staffing Levels

Regulation 19 Health Welfare and Development of the Child

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

Regulation 25 First Aid

Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures

Regulation 28 Insurance

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, persons in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) One of the registered providers was the designated person in charge and there was two named persons available to deputise in the service.
- (b) The registered provider was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

On the day of inspection, fourteen staff files were reviewed which included the registered provider, kitchen cook, and twelve staff who provide direct care for the children.

- (2)(a) Twenty-three of the required 28 written validated references on file, in respect of the 14 adults were from a past employer.
 - (b) Five of the required 28 written validated references on file, in respect of the 14 adults were from a reputable source.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 14 adults.
 - (d) Documentary evidence indicated that 6 adults, who had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, had the required police vetting.
- (4) Thirteen staff working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to Level 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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, provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) During the period of the inspection the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained, there were 10 adults working in the service with 65 preschool children in the morning. Additionally, there was a cook in the kitchen and the registered provider and manager provided childcare relief and assisted with the administration of the inspection.
- 9 children were aged 1 year to 2 years,
 - 5 children were aged 2 to 3 years,
 - 51 children were aged 3 to 5 years,
- Seven adults were working with 41 preschool children in the afternoon on the day of inspection. Additionally, there was a kitchen cook and the manager and registered provider assisted with the administration parts of the inspection and childcare relief.
- 9 children were aged 1 year to 2 years,
 - 5 children were aged 2 to 3 years,
 - 27 children were aged 3 to 5 years,
- (8)(a) Documentary evidence indicated that at least two adults were on the premises when the pre-school 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.

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

(1)(a)

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service. The food observed was healthy and nutritious.
- The snacks provided by parents and guardians in the Part time Montessori room consisted of a selection of sandwiches, brown bread, cheese, ham, rice cakes, yogurts, wraps, crackers, and pieces of fruit. The service provides the snacks and meals for the service with French toast for mid-morning snack at 10.30am with fruit and yogurt at 12.30pm and dinner at 2.00pm which consisted of chicken, carrots, peas, mashed potato with gravy and banana bread for afternoon snack at approx. 4.00pm. The kitchen was well stocked with extra food for any child who was hungry outside of the meal and snack times.
- Water was available for children to self-serve and access throughout the session.
- Children were observed enjoying snack time. The children were afforded plenty of time to enjoy their snack and meals in a relaxed and unhurried environment.
- Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence.
- All the older children were toilet trained and either toileted independently or with some assistance as required. The dignity of children using the toilet was preserved.
- The children who wore a nappy were changed in a timely manner while their dignity was preserved throughout.
- The staff were observed to wear an apron and gloves while changing the childrens nappy. Handwashing was observed by both children and staff.
- The staff supervised children's hand washing before snack time, after toileting, after blowing their noses, after outdoor play and prior to going home.

- Children had plenty of opportunities to move about freely, exploring their environment, and improving their emerging skills such as coordination and balance.
- All the children had the opportunity to play outside, on the day of the inspection. These children were appropriately dressed wearing hats and coats when playing outside.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The registered provider advised the inspector that ongoing efforts to ensure partnership and exchange of information with parents and guardians continued. The inspector was advised that the service had shared policies with parents and guardians.
- A key person system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. Documentary evidence indicated that the role of the key person was also to liaise with parents and guardians.
- On speaking with staff, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school. This information was provided at collection and drop off times, via text messages and by phone calls.
- The service used a childcare application to interact with parents and guardians on each child's learning and development. The inspector viewed this application, and were shown the service policies, templates, and staff observations relating to a child and evidence of themes and experiences the children engaged in.
- Additionally, classroom learning journals showed photographs of children involved in activities, the themes the children engaged in and staff observations.
- Each child had an individual scrapbook or journal and copy books showing their individual art and craft work and drawings and writings.
- There was evidence of short, medium and long-term curriculum planning. The programme of care was flexible and guided by the children's choices. Children were supported by the staff during periods of individual and group-based activities, the staff sensitively supervised and intervened when necessary. The themes of the week included transportation, Mother's day and Springtime.
- The staff were observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children. During observed interactions, the staff demonstrated that they knew the children well, recognising and valuing their individual interests, needs and learning. The staff were observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them, and responded to their requests. The staff interacted in a positive way with

the children e.g., they sat at the children’s level, maintained good eye contact, showed empathy and a good understanding of each child.

- Staff were observed helping children find solutions, supporting them and talking to children in a variety of ways- discussing, questioning, modelling, commenting, extending a child’s activities, and initiating games and activities.
- In the playrooms, the children engaged in free play, story time, tabletop activities and circle time. The children sang action songs and participated in a ‘Stretch N Grow’- fun exercise class together. The children were observed at construction, sorting shapes and colours, stacking materials, at art craft work, and playing shop with real world items.
- The children chatted to the inspector about their day and talked about their families, likes and interests.
- On the day of inspection, all children played outside at the side and rear of the pre-school. These children were observed playing with transport vehicles, riding on scooters, trikes and on balance beams, playing football, playing house, playing with the sand basin and building blocks.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The layout of each playroom allowed the staff to supervise the children as they moved into the different interest areas.
- The equipment was stored on low-level shelving and was readily accessible by the pre-school children. The play equipment and materials were age and stage appropriate and offered a child manipulative activity designed to encourage hand eye co-ordination, develop fine motor skills and logical thinking.
- Suitably sized tables and chairs were provided in each of the playrooms for the pre-school children.
- The resources were organised and easily accessible to each pre-school child. The rooms were bright, colourful and inviting for the children and staff.

OUTDOOR PLAY AREA:

- The area was divided into three areas for the different age groups. The play area was secure with boundary walls, gates and a colourful artificial type of grass surface.
- The area was well stocked with play materials and equipment for the children in the preschool and afterschool programme.

- Items included slides, footballs, transport vehicles, a sand basin with utensils, ride on toys, scooters, trikes, balance beams, seating, tuff tables, a climbing unit, a planting area, playhouse and transport vehicles.
- There were additional play items in a secure storage area if required.

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 main entrance door into the pre-school was secured to prevent access by an unauthorized person or the unsupervised exiting by a pre-school child.
- In the playrooms, cleaning agents were stored inaccessible and out of children's reach.
- The kitchen and staff room had a method of security and thereby inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- There were no leads or flexes accessible to the children posing a strangulation or trip hazard.
- All toys and play equipment were observed to be safe and in good condition.
- Fire doors were unobstructed.
- The room temperature of the playrooms was recorded and maintained between 18 -22 °C.
- Daily records of attendance were kept for all of children attending the playroom.
- The service had a daily risk assessment system to ensure any potential risk or hazards were identified and remedial action was taken.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with warm water, liquid soap, and disposable paper hand towels. Thermostatically controlled warm water was available for use by the children to facilitate hygienic hand washing with a temperature less than the recommended 43°C.
- During the inspection, the children were assisted and encouraged to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after using a tissue, after outdoor play, and prior to going home.
- There was evidence of a daily cleaning schedule.

- There was a designated nappy changing area on the ground floor with two wash hand basins, a foot pedalled lidded bin and an airtight sealable bin for the storage of nappies and two clean intact changing mats.
- There was a nappy changing area on the first floor in a toilet cubicle with a designated wash hand basin, clean intact mat and air tight foot pedalled lidded nappy bin.
- The playroom was adequately ventilated with windows left open whilst maintaining the room temperature at the required level.
- Perishable foods from the children’s lunch boxes were stored in the service fridges.

Administration of Medication:

- Documentation was available to support the safe administration of medication when required and the manager described procedures which were in place to safely administer medication. A sample of 15 medication administration forms were reviewed with adequate information recorded and signatures of parents and staff were witnessed.

Safe Sleep:

- The sleep areas had an adequate number of standard sized cots for the babies to sleep. Low level beds were available for children over two years of age.
- The sleep rooms and playroom temperatures were maintained between 16-20 degrees Celsius. A thermometer was available for staff to measure and monitor the room temperatures.
- The children’s sleep observations were recorded by staff every ten minutes on the service’s electronic application system. These observations included the children’s colour, position, breathing and any remedial actions taken.

Fire Safety:

- The fire assembly points were easily identified.
- The manager had a record of up-to-date fire safety training.

Outing:

- No outings were taken on the day of inspection. An outing policy was available if required.

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 two staff members were trained in First Aid Responder for Children (FAR) and nine staff had first aid training with a paediatric module were available to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box that was safely stored, easily accessible and in a conspicuous position in the office and on the first floor upstairs.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid bag was fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service and items were within date.

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 in writing was kept and maintained in the service of the monthly fire drills. The last monthly fire drill was dated 14/04/2025.
- (b) A record was maintained of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment with the last annual service dated February 2025.
- The annual maintenance for the services smoke and fire detection system was dated February 2025.
- (3) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the pre-school room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available for eighty preschool children in a full day care with an expiry date 01/03/2026.