

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 Furan, 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
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Date(s) of Inspection:	21/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	58	PM	35
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A- (1st Floor-Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	F Nic Dhonnacha
Title:	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).

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Description of service

This pre-school service is privately run and located in the village of Moycullen, west Co Galway. The pre-school caters for children aged between 0 months and 6 years, from Monday to Friday between 08.00 and 18.00. The pre-school offers full day-care, part-time care, an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from 09.00 to 12.00 and a sessional care programme. Additionally, an afterschool programme from 13.30 to 18.00 is offered for school aged children. 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 1- 2 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 2 ½ years 3 ½ years) and part-time Pre-School Montessori room (the age range of the children was 3 years to 5 years). 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. A play based preschool curriculum focusing on emerging interests is provided with elements of Montessori. A secure designated outdoor play area is available for all age groups of children to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is onsite on a daily basis. There are 14 adults in total working in the preschool service. There are two named persons in charge and a named designated deputy. The staff have documentary evidence of on-going training and education. Thirteen staff hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to Level 9 on the National Qualifications Framework. One of the 13 qualified staff members was assigned as relief and provides support under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIMS). Additionally, one cook was designated to kitchen duties, preparing, cooking and serving the service meals.

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

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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, premises and facilities. The inspection 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 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.*

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

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.

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On the day of inspection, 14 staff files were available for review which included the registered provider, the cook and 12 staff who provide direct care for the children. One new staff member commenced in the service since the previous inspection on the 26/03/2025. This file was reviewed on inspection.

- (2)(a) One written validated reference was available on file from a past employer for the new member of staff.
- (b) One written validated reference was available on file from a source other than a past employer for the new staff member.
- (c) A garda vetting disclosure had been obtained for the new member of staff working in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years for all 14 staff working in the service.
- (d) Documentary evidence indicated that the new member of staff did not live outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, therefore, did not require police vetting.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) had been carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4) The new staff member and 12 existing staff working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to Level 9 in Early Childhood Care and Education.
- (6A) One staff member was employed to provide additional support under the access and inclusion model of care (AIMS).

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) Documentary evidence indicated that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children. At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children attending the preschool service.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained. On the morning of the inspection, there were 58 children present. All children were aged between 1 year and 5 years of age. There were 9 staff directly caring for the children. Additionally, a staff member was providing additional support under the Access and Inclusion model (AIMS) and the registered provider and two persons in charge were available to provide relief cover and assist with the administration part of the inspection when necessary.
- 13 children were aged 1 to 2 years.
 - 12 children were aged between 2 ½ to 3 ½ years.
 - 33 children were aged 3 to 5 years.
- In the afternoon there were 35 preschool children present and 21 school aged children with 8 staff directly caring for the children. Additionally, the registered provider and two persons in charge were available to provide relief cover when necessary.
- 11 children were aged 1 to 2 years.
 - 11 children were aged between 2 ½ to 3 ½ years.
 - 13 children were aged 3 to 5 years.
- (8)(c) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

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;*

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- (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.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.
- (5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) & (i)

A sample of 15 children's records were reviewed by the early years inspector.

The entries reviewed were factual, consistent and accurate.

The 15 randomly selected children's records contained the following:

- (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 stopped attending the service (where relevant).
 - (d) The name and address of the child's parent or guardian and a telephone number where that parent or guardian (or a relative or friend of the parent or child) can be contacted during the hours of operation.
 - (e) Written authorisation / permissions for collecting the child.
 - (f) Details are recorded of any illness, allergy, or additional need(s) the child had, together with all the information relevant to the provision of specific care or attention.
 - (g) The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
 - (h) A record of any immunisations the child has had.
 - (i) Written parental or guardian consent was included to allow the child to have appropriate medical treatment if there was an emergency.
- (4) & (5) The person in charge advised and documentary evidence from file review indicated, that the pre-school had a system to allow all relevant children's records were kept for 2 years from the date a child stopped attending the service.

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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)

Basic Needs

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snacks and meals without being rushed. The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The crockery, cutlery and drinking utensils used were suitable for the children's ages and stage of development.
- The staff responded to children's individual personalities, sensitivities and needs in relation to nappy changing and toileting.
- On the day of the inspection children from the Playgroup room required nappy changing and were changed in a sensitive manner while having their dignity and privacy maintained in the designated nappy changing areas.
- The older children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet. Children were allowed to take their time during toileting. Children were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence and to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- Children had plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance.
- The children had the opportunity to play in the outdoor play area with appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather.

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Supporting Relationships

- The staff were observed encouraging children to think critically, ask questions and respond to them in a way that promotes sustained shared thinking- nurturing and comforting children, using soft tones, the child's individual name, getting down to their level and making eye contact.
- Visual aids (picture and word reminders) and instructions were displayed and used with the children to support their learning throughout the preschool.
- The atmosphere in the learning environment was encouraging and unhurried in all playrooms.
- The service provided parents and guardians with daily information, including significant events or activities involving their child, for example, verbal communication at drop-off and collection times, a social media interactive communication application and via profile scrapbooks. Staff collated a profile scrapbook "My Learning Journal" for each individual child, showing the 'child's journey' using observations and including samples of a child's work. The themes to date included exploring Moycullen, Autumn trees, leaf cutting, Autumn squirrels, pumpkins, transport, drill painting, ice painting, healthy baking, first aid, our solar system, three little pigs, the life cycle of the butterfly, cherry blossoms tree, daffodils, feelings, sharing, my body and many more.
- Staff adjusted the level of support provided to children depending on the child's abilities, allowing for children's partial participation and participation with support in games and learning.
- On the day of inspection, the children were observed at free play, at story time, at construction building, connecting, at sensory play, at pretend kitchen / house and sorting stacking materials. The children played games, puzzles and some learnt about caterpillars and their lifecycle. One child stated his favourite thing was bugs and the staff member in the room choose the child's interest and discussed bugs and earth worms as a topic during circle time.
- The children enjoyed listening to stories and in particular the children in the Senior Montessori room listened to a story called 'Super Worm'. The children played with small world items, little people, cuddly toys and dolls. They participated in art and craft work and sensory play.
- On the day of inspection, in the outdoor areas, the children were observed climbing the activity centre, running, chasing, playing on transport vehicles, at the tuff trays with sensory play, sorting, playing in the play house, on the balance beams, some children were kicking ball and building caves and exploring and sliding on the slide.
- Staff responded to the younger children in a timely and appropriate way when they were crying or when becoming upset.

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- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. For example, the inspector noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity- 'that is great' 'well done' and used questions such as 'what should we do next?', 'is there any other way to do this?', to allow children to critically think and explore.

Physical and Material Environment

- The space in the four playrooms was designed and arranged to maintain a space that was clean, organised and free of clutter.
- The environment was comfortable, inviting and laid out to accommodate the needs of all children and staff in the pre-school.
- The service had safe and comfortable spaces for infants, toddlers, or children not walking, to lie, roll, crawl and to be protected from children who were more mobile.
- Staff had a comfortable place to sit, to hold and feed infants and to read, interact and comfort children.
- The children had access to enough varied materials and equipment, which were rotated to suit the changing programme, to suit current and new interests.
- Materials and equipment were arranged so they were visible and readily accessible to promote independent access by children in all playrooms.
- Each playroom had visual aids, artwork, learning charts / posters, little helpers system, curriculum planning, the children's emerging interests, who is in today, daily routines and visual prompts on display throughout the service.
- The service had 2 designated sleep rooms with 7 cots in total and stackable beds for older children's sleep provision.
- Each playroom had designated cosy corners where the children could sit, relax and take a break if they choose to.

Outdoor play area

- The outdoor play area had four areas each with each area interconnecting to the other. The ground surface was covered with artificial grass with fencing walls and a gate to secure the area. Ample toys and play equipment were available for the various age groups attending the service. Additional toys were in storage and rotated on a seasonal basis as advised by the staff on the day.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- There was a healthy eating policy available on request.
- The food provided on the day of inspection looked colourful, nutritious and adequate quantities and suitable portions were provided for the children attending the service.
- A 3-week menu plan was available in the kitchen on display and in the playrooms.
- The parents and guardians provided the snacks and lunch for the children attending on a sessional basis.
- The preschool offered breakfast in the morning with cereal, toast and milk or water to drink if any children had not eaten at home.
- The main morning meal was served at approximately 10.30- pancakes, fruit and milk or water was offered to drink.
- The mid-morning snack was a selection of fruit, crackers and yogurt with milk or water to drink.
- The hot dinner was served between 14.00 and 14.30- mince, pasta / potatoes and a selection of vegetables were provided with milk or water to drink.
- The afternoon snack was at approximately 16.00 with a selection of savoury sandwiches or wedges and beans with milk or water to drink.
- If any children were hungry outside of these times the staff provided crackers, fruit, toast or bagels with cheese as an option.
- Water was readily available for each child in each playroom throughout the day and while the children were in the outdoor play area.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) no person other than-
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,
 - (iii) an employee, or
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

- (1) A record book detailed the children's arrival and departure to and from the service daily.
- (3)(a) The registered provider ensured that no person other than the persons outlined in (i) to (iv) entered the service without prior approval. All visitors recorded had written approval by the person in charge.
- (b) A written record was available recording all visitors at the entrance to the service.

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) Two staff had first aid responder (FAR) training and were available to the children during the operating hours of the service. It was acknowledged that nine additional staff had training in paediatric first aid for children.
- (2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in readily identifiable area in the office and a small first aid box with supplies was available in each playroom.
- (b) First aid boxes were available in each room and the office for use by the adults in the event of an emergency. All content items were in date and a checklist was available, signed and dated.

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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) Records were available to demonstrate that monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 11/3/2026.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system were available. The most recent smoke alarm system and firefighting equipment maintenance service took place respectively on the 26/2/2026.
- (4) Fire action notices demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed throughout the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for 80 pre-school children. The policy was valid until the 28th of February 2027.