

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE130
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Name of Service:	Cocoon Childcare Sallins
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Address of Service:	Millbank, Sallins, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 DY99
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Name of Registered Provider:	Barry Cunningham
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/06/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	78	PM	62
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Suite 7 Vista Primary Care Ballymore Eustace Road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher, T. Duignan, F. Joyce
Title:	Early Years Inspectors and Inspection Registration Manager

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

Cocoon Childcare in Sallins Co. Kildare is one of a multiple of private full day care services located in Kildare, Wicklow and Dublin operated by the registered provider, Mr. Barry Cunningham. A service is provided to children aged between 0-6 years old and opens Monday to Friday from 07:15am-18:30pm. Sessional and part-time care is also provided for pre-school children. The service operates from a purpose-built premises in a private residential housing estate in Sallins. Six pre-school rooms, two sleep rooms an office, kitchen and a wraparound play area are provided on the premises.

The service is a registered to provide school age care.

Staffing

There were 18 staff members employed in the service, the registered provider was not present and does not work directly with the children. Twenty people were present in the service on the day of inspection including sixteen staff members working directly with the children, the person in charge, one student, one kitchen staff member, the operations manager for the company and one person employed for the care of school aged children.

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 19(1)(a), as a result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby, Wobbler, Toddler and Pre-school 3 rooms.

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, operations manager, 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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a),(b)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

The records of 23 staff members employed and/or present in the service, including one student, were reviewed.

(2)(a),(b)

Forty-six written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source, in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of 23 records reviewed.

(c)

Garda Vetting disclosures were available for 23 employed staff members, including one student.

- (d)
Police vetting was available for 14 adults who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (3)
The procedures specified in paragraph (2) had been completed prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.
- (4)
Twenty staff members employed and working directly with the children whose records were reviewed, held a major award at Level 5 or higher in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework or were in possession of a letter of eligibility to practice issued by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

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)
There were 78 children attending the service being supervised directly by 16 adults.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day as specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the inspection, this was verified by the up-to-date staff roster.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(a),(b),(c)

The registered provider ensured that a copy of the regulations was available in the service. This was open to inspection on the premises when requested from the person in charge by the early year's inspector.

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

Basic needs of children

The service promoted healthy eating and provided all meals and snacks which were freshly prepared and cooked on the premises. The morning snack provided consisted of homemade banana muffins and the hot meal served was pasta, with mince and vegetables and water or milk was available to drink. Fresh drinking water was freely available to all children during the day.

Children were afforded plenty of time to eat their meals and were not rushed. Bibs were provided for the babies and younger children and the staff members ensured the younger children were comfortably strapped into the high and low chairs during mealtimes. Babies were encouraged to self-feed a portion of their main meal while supervised by the staff members at all times and assisted as necessary.

The staff sat with the older children during mealtimes ensuring this time was a sociable and enjoyable experience. Regular hand washing practices were observed throughout the inspection, self-toileting was supported, and the children were supervised at all times. Children enjoyed freedom of movement within their pre-school rooms and the babies were observed crawling and exploring their environment.

Sun cream and sunhats were applied to ensure the children were sun safe during the sunny weather when playing in the outdoor area.

The sleep needs of babies and the younger children were provided on each child's individual need for sleep; this was facilitated by a sufficient number of standard cots for children under two years of age. Nappy changing procedures were carried out on a routine basis and as required. A comfortable couch was available in the baby room to enable staff to comfortably sit, and nurse or bottle feed the children.

Stackable beds were available for any older children should they wish to sleep while attending the full day care or part-time services.

Supporting relationships around children

All children were observed relaxed and comfortable as they engaged in their daily routines, play and activities among their peers and with the staff caring for them throughout the day. The atmosphere was friendly and child centred. Frequent positive interactions were observed between the staff members and the children, both verbal and nonverbal and all interactions with the children were respectful, warm and kind.

Family walls with photographs of the children and their families provided reassurance and helped the children to remain connected with home.

Babies who were upset or tired were immediately nursed and comforted. Information was shared with parents and guardians at the drop off and collection times and a copy of the babies' and younger children's daily routines of eating, sleeping and personal care was provided to parents at collection time. The manager uses telephone and email as alternative methods of communication with parents and guardians. Individual meetings can be arranged by appointment as necessary.

Physical and material environment

The Baby room was equipped with age-appropriate low level child sized tables and chairs and one highchair and the remaining care rooms were equipped with age-appropriate child sized tables and chairs to enable the children sit comfortably for meals and tabletop activities. Low-level shelving in the rooms had a selection of toys and equipment easily accessible to the children.

The Baby room provided equipment and spaces to encourage and support children to develop their emerging skills such as crawling, pulling themselves up and balance. There was a selection of stacking and sorting toys to support emerging cognitive development and fine motor skills and natural opened ended materials to support sensory development. The Wobbler room was equipped with a wooden climbing/crawling unit which provided opportunities for the children's gross motor development and balance skills.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs of children

1. It is acknowledged that the children did avail of a period of outdoor play before midday, however, due to the lack of shade provided in the play area during hot weather, the children and babies had limited time outside for play activities throughout the day.

Supporting relationships around children

2. It was observed in the Wobbler room that the transition from dinner time to sleep time at 12:00pm was not a calm, relaxed experience for the children, for example, several children were wandering around the room with no planned activity, one child was still sitting eating dinner and the staff were occupied either changing nappies or preparing other children for sleep in the adjacent cot room, it therefore became disorganised and confusing at this time.
3. The noise level in the Toddler room was observed consistently high with loud vocal tones used by a staff member and subsequently by the children creating a challenging environment for children to be heard at times.
4. While it is acknowledged that a support staff member came into the Toddler room and managed the mealtime at 12:00pm, the care practices during this period were weak as evidenced by the following:
 - One of the staff members was handing out the lunch to the children while the other staff member was preparing the room for sleep.
 - The staff members did not sit with the children and actively assist them to feed themselves. One child was observed to throw their dinner on the floor.

- One child did not stay at the table and went and lay down in the rest area. One other child was wandering around drinking water. Another child was walking around drinking milk. Two other children climbed on to a play unit and switched on a light switch.

Physical and material environment

5. There were limited areas of interest in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms, it is acknowledged there was a home corner and an area with a sand tray, however, these areas and the available resources were not planned, organised or attractively presented to engage and encourage the children to play. It was observed that the sand tray in the Wobbler room was too small for the numbers of children attending and the children's books were observed on a high shelf and therefore inaccessible. There was no push/pull equipment such as dolls' buggies, trolleys or pull along toys in these rooms. There was also limited other sensorial materials such as water play, shredded paper, playdough or gloop readily available to the children.
6. The outdoor play environment lacked defined areas of interest such as places to hide and explore, mud kitchens, dedicated water or sand play areas, planting/digging areas. There was limited play equipment for the numbers of children attending the service.
7. The rest area in the Toddler room consisted of a large rug with seven cushions rather than a child sized wipeable sofa which would allow a child to sit comfortably.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the written response submitted that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Basic needs of children

1.

Sun sail shades have been purchased and due for installation to allow for shaded play areas on warmer days. In addition, the outdoor cabin will operate as a permanent sheltered outdoor play area for all age groups. A scheduled quarterly calendar reminder has been shared with the centre management team to review outdoor shelter/shade requirements on an ongoing basis.

Supporting relationships around children

2, 3, 4,

Prior to the Inspection, a team training day was scheduled for completion on Saturday 17th June focusing on 'Supportive Transitions and Interactions', facilitated by both the centre management team and Operations. This training included topics to support both daily and regular transitions, the role of the adult and ideas to best support practice. The staff team completed the early childhood curriculum framework and the national quality framework practice guide self-evaluation tool as a guidance tool for reflection and took part in group work activities and

demonstrations to enhance knowledge and learning. The centre has appointed a Quality Liaison Person (QLP), who will attend organised bi-monthly COP days facilitated by the Operations team focussing on a variety of topics to support best practice and enhance learning opportunities for children. The newly appointed QLP and centre management team will actively observe and support both the Wobbler and Toddler room to develop smoother and effective transitions.

Physical and material environment

5, 6, 7,

A full review of resources and areas of interest within both care rooms and the outdoor play area was completed, and an order has been placed to enhance and support children's play materials. The care room layouts were revised, and materials are easily accessible to the children. In addition to the review of resources and areas of interest, the team members were enrolled on an external training webinar 'Learning Environments in the Early Years', focussing on enhancing both indoor and outdoor environments to support children's learning experiences.

The centre management team will complete quarterly audits on both the indoor and outdoor environments, ensuring that areas of interest and resources are well maintained and accessible to children. The centre QLP will complete our newly devised area of interest audits on an ongoing basis, which will support the learning opportunities available to the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographs of sunshades ordered; photographs of calendar schedules for review of outdoor space including shelters depending on the weather.
- 2, 3, 4, Documents including training content completed.
- 5, 6, 7, Documents with evidence of audits completed, resources and equipment ordered for indoor and outdoor areas.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 19. This will be assessed at the next inspection.

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 to the service was secured and controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the safe storage of cleaning agents. Daily indoor and outdoor risk assessment were completed by staff and displayed in each care room.

Infection Control:

The premises were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition and cleaning schedules were completed daily. Children's handwashing routines were established and thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and hygienically dispensed paper towel was supplied at all sinks to support hygienic hand washing and drying. Gloves, plastic aprons, nappy sacks and foot pedal operated bins were available for hygienic nappy changing practices. Children's soothers were stored in individual labelled containers in the Baby room and a system was in place for the sterilisation of mouthed toys.

Bed linen was individual to each child and stored accordingly with laundry schedules in place.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection and staff members advised during conversation with the inspector, they were aware of the procedures to be followed to administer medicine safely to a child if required while attending the service.

Safe Sleep:

Two sleep rooms, with a total of 17 cots, were in place for children less than 2 years of age and low-level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. There was an adequate number of cots to provide needs led sleep for young children. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and practice as advised in conversation with the inspector. It was observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in their care. Both sleep rooms were ventilated by means of openable windows and standalone air conditioning units were in place to control the environmental room temperatures.

Fire Safety:

Regular monthly fire drills were carried out and records maintained. All fire exits were easily identifiable and unobstructed.

Outing:

Outings are not conducted from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

- The nappy changing practices observed were not consistent with the step-by-step nappy changing procedure for the service as outlined by the following observations:
 - The staff member did not prepare the area prior to commencing nappy changing.
 - The single use plastic gloves and apron were not removed after the soiled nappy was disposed of and before a new nappy applied.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The person authorised on behalf of the registered provider stated in the written response submitted that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- All staff have been retrained in our nappy changing policy with demonstrations on effective nappy changing. The centre management team are actively monitoring nappy changes at regular intervals to ensure that all steps of the nappy changing policy are being adhered to.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Staff training document.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23. This area of practice will be assessed at the next inspection.

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.
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.
- (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.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1)
The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.
- (2)
Not applicable as this was not a drop-in service.
- (3) (a),(b)
The person in charge ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.
- (4)
The person in charge confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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)

Persons trained in first aid response (FAR) were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a),(b)

The first aid box was stored in a conspicuous position in the service and immediately available at all times.

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 firefighting 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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place 23 May 2023.

(b)

A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were last serviced 30 September 2023 and 30 May 2023 respectively.

(4)

Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 31 January 2024. The insurance provided cover for 116 children.