

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH163		
Name of Service:	Sandy's Crèche & Montessori		
Address of Service:	Grange End, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	A85 RD28		
Name of Registered Provider:	Sandra Rooney		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	20/03/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	70	PM 64
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath		
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray & AM. Cunningham		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
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	Not Applicable		

Description of service

Sandy's Childcare Ltd is 1 of 2 childcare facilities operated by the registered provider. The service provides a full day, part time and sessional care and education to children from 0 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE).

The service operates from 07:00am to 18:30pm Monday to Friday and is located in an adapted residential property consisting of 5 care rooms, 1 cot room, sensory room, dining room of the kitchen, staff room and sanitary facilities.

The rooms in the service were as follows:

Downstairs:

The **Toddler** room facilitates the care of children from 1 to 2 years.

Junior 1 room provides care for children from 2 to 3 years.

Senior Montessori and the Montessori rooms provides care and education for children from 2 years 8 months to school going age.

Upstairs:

Junior 2 room caters for children from 2 years 6 months to 3 years.

There are 3 outdoor spaces on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager, deputy manager, 13 childcare staff, 4 adults, 1 student and a cook. Present on the morning of inspection were the manager, deputy person in charge, 11 childcare staff, 1 student and a cook. The registered provider was present in the service during the inspection.

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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

20/03/2024 An Immediate action notice was issued pertaining to Regulation 23 Safety.

22/03/2024 A response was received by the registered provider which was accepted by the Inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.

(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.

(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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Twenty-two staff files were reviewed.

Forty-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 22 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) Police vetting was available for 2 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Sixteen childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) One staff member was employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Three staff members did not have a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. One staff member did not have adequate supporting documentation to demonstrate that they had a childcare qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4) The three staff members in question are currently in the process of completing their Level 5 and Level 6. These staff members will work under supervision with a qualified staff member at all times and will not be included in the adult: child ratios. The registered provider in the future will ensure that all staff have a childcare qualification before commencing employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Qualifications for 1 staff member.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has given assurances that the unqualified staff members will always be supervised when working in the service and will not be counted as part of the adult:child ratio.

Although the non-compliance remains outstanding, the Inspectorate accepts the assurances given by the registered provider and this will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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) Present on the day of inspection were the manager, deputy person in charge, 11 childcare staff and a student caring for 70 children.

(2) On the morning of the inspection the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:

The **Toddler** room had 10 children ranging in age from 1 to 2 years being cared for by 2 staff.

The **Junior 1** room had 16 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years being cared for by 4 staff.

Senior Montessori room had 15 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to school going age being cared for by 2 staff.

The **Montessori** room had 15 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to school going age being cared for by 2 staff and 1 student.

Upstairs:

Junior 2 room had 14 children ranging in age from 2 years 6 months to 3 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8) (a) According to the staff roster presented to the Early Years Inspectors after the inspection had commenced the registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(i) On arrival to the service there was no staff roster available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1(i) Staff rosters were available but due to a staff member taking time off it needed to be changed on the day. The registered provider will ensure that up to date staff rosters are maintained on a daily basis and available for inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

Staff roster seen during inspection.

Summary Comment

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliance for regulation 16 (i). The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

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

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- The adults were observed promoting positive behaviour and supported children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment and materials. In the Junior 1 and Toddler

rooms any child who became upset were nurtured and cuddled until they settled. Children who needed quiet time from the Montessori and Senior Montessori rooms used the Sensory room as a change of environment. The children showed confidence around the staff members and sought out staff members for reassurance, comfort and support.

- Staff members were observed changing children’s nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions observed. The older children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- Children were observed enjoying meaningful, sustained play with tabletop activities, art and crafts and free playing with lots of conversation and laughter observed. Staff supported children’s learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative. Children attending the Senior Montessori and Montessori room moved between the two rooms freely. In the care rooms the staff members stated that the themes of the week were “Spring” and “Easter” with artwork displayed which supported the children’s individual efforts. Transitions were handled smoothly with staff giving the children ample time to complete one activity before starting the next.
- The staff members sat and chatted with the children at mealtimes, helping the children when required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- Some of the children in the Toddler room availed of an early morning nap while the older children were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest at the service’s designated sleep time after dinner.
- The service embraces outdoor play and learning with all children observed enjoying outdoor play with their peers on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with family photographs displayed on “The Family Tree’ in some of the care rooms.
- Individual care plans were available for children who required additional support and were adapted to suit the individual child.
- A written record was kept in the Toddler room of nappy changes, sleep times, meals and issues pertaining to each child as occurred during the day and this information was passed on to parents or guardians when collecting their child at the end of the day.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.
- (3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-
- (a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Cosy areas consisting of mats and cushions were available if a child needed to take a break from activities and rest. Children over 2 years were accommodated to sleep on stackable beds in the Junior 1 room. One cot room was available for the children under 2 years with a total of 8 standard cots.

(3)(a) There were 4 outdoor spaces which were suitable and secure. The Toddler room, Junior 1 room, Montessori and Senior Montessori rooms had large outdoor spaces off their rooms enclosed by fencing with an artificial grass surface. These spaces were also used by the Junior 2 room. Two of the spaces had partially sheltered areas, permitting outdoor play in all types of weather.

A large, enclosed grass and gravel area was also located to the side of the building.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- With the exception of the Toddler room, the play materials and play equipment in the remainder of the care rooms were visible and easily accessible to the children on open shelving at their height which supported children to have choices in selecting materials and equipment to play with. Tables and chairs in each room were appropriate to the age and stage of development of pre-school children attending the

specific care rooms. The care rooms were well resourced and had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys.

- Equipment in the outdoor areas included toy cars, ride on toys, rockers, climbing tunnel, plastic activity unit with a slide and swing, wooden benches and building blocks, push/pull and ride on cars and trikes, a large wooden play kitchen, sand and water trays and number of climbing frames and slides.

The large grass and gravel area which was suitable to the older age group had a wooden frame saucer swing, mud kitchen, gutters mounted to the wall for pouring activities, wooden activity unit with 2 slides and a climbing ramp, sand pit and a wooden playhouse.

Non-Compliance Information

1. In the Toddler room, there were no developed areas of interest. A wooden play kitchen was turned into the wall and not in use as it had to be repaired. Although the play equipment was stored on shelving at a level accessible to the children the storage boxes had:

- Plastic closed lids in place which would be difficult for this age group to open.
- Many of the storage boxes were too heavy for a child of this age to lift off the shelving.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The toy kitchen has now been repaired.

The lids are now removed so children can access boxes easily. The toys have been divided between the boxes, so the children are able to lift them unsupported by an adult.

The staff in the care room will ensure that the lay out and play materials in the room meets the play and learning needs of the children on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of equipment in the Toddler room.

Summary Comment

The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliance for regulation 21. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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

- The service had a 2-week menu plan with a selection of meals ranging from meat and poultry with a variety of snacks. For the children attending the service on a full day care basis, breakfast was available from 7am to 9:30am consisting of a choice of cereals and toast. The main meal of the day was served in the dining area off the kitchen at 11:15am for the younger children and up to 12:30pm for the older children which was chicken curry and rice. Soup and bread was served at 14:30pm with a choice of bananas, yogurts, rice cakes with cheese available before the children left for home. The older children brought their own morning and afternoon snack. Water was the drink of choice with individual bottles/cups for the children in the care rooms.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The main door to the service was secured and the outdoor spaces were enclosed and had secure gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and outdoor space.
- An outdoor risk assessment was conducted on a daily basis.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy and nappy changing policy were implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.
- Childrens pacifiers were placed in individual boxes and labelled.
- The service was clean.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰ C while children were sleeping.

Fire Safety:

The following fire safety measures were observed:

- The fire assembly point was located in the outdoor space off the Junior 1 care room.
- Fire drills were conducted on a monthly basis.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following safety measures were not in place on the day of inspection:

1. At 10:50am the water temperature from the tap at the sinks in the sanitary accommodation for the Montessori and Senior Montessori rooms was recorded at 60⁰ C.
At 10:52am the water from the tap at the sink in the sanitary accommodation on the first floor for the children in the Junior room 2 was recorded at 59⁰ C. Both these reading pose a scalding risk. The manager was informed and the staff were advised not to use the hot taps.
An Immediate Action Notice was issued with a response received from the registered provider on the 22/03/24 which was accepted by the Inspectorate.
2. Garda vetting was available for 3 staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
3. In the outdoor area off the Senior Montessori room a counting stand had a broken wooden panel which was a splinter risk.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were not in place on the day of inspection:

4. There was no up to date cleaning schedule in the Toddler room. The last recorded cleaning schedule was 30/10/2023.
5. In the nappy changing area downstairs a swing bin was used for the disposal of nappies. All nappy bins must be pedal operated and have a non-touch mechanism.
6. In the cot room the fifth cot had no protective covering on the foam mattress.

Safe Sleep:

The following safe sleep measures were not in place on the day of inspection:

7. On arrival to the service the following was observed in the cot room:
 - Sleep checks were not recorded for sleeping children at the required 10 minutes intervals.
 - The room was too dark, resulting in the inability for staff to observe children's colour during sleep checks.
 - A paper thermometer was used to monitor the air temperature while children were asleep which is not adequate to give a correct reading.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Each day an identified staff member is responsible to check and record the temperature of water at the sinks at 8am, 12pm and again at 4pm.
2. An application has been made for up-to-date garda vetting for the 3 staff members with 2 garda vetting received. The 1 remaining garda vetting will be forwarded to the inspectorate when received. The registered provider will ensure that the staff files are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure garda vetting is renewed every 3 years.
3. The counting stand has been removed. A risk assessment will be conducted in the outdoor area on a daily basis.

Infection Control:

4. Cleaning schedules are now recorded in the Toddler room on a daily basis. A meeting was held with the staff members. This practice will be monitored by management on a daily basis.
5. The swing bin has been replaced with a pedal operated bin. Only pedal operation bins will be used for contaminated waste.

6. The foam mattress has now got a protective covering. Weekly checks will be done in the cot room to ensure all mattresses have a protective covering.

Safe Sleep:

7. A staff meeting was held and all issues pertaining to sleep were discussed. A sleep log is now available to record 10 minutes sleep checks. Two-night lights have been ordered. A digital thermometer has also been ordered. The registered provider will ensure that the sleep policy is implemented in practice on a daily basis

Supporting documentation submitted

1.22/03/2024 A response was received by the registered provider to the IAN which was accepted by the Inspectorate.

2 Up to date garda vetting received for 1 staff member.

3&5 Removed on the day of the inspection.

4.Up to date cleaning schedules.

6.Photographic evidence of mattress protector.

7.Sleep log.

Order forms for 2-night lights and digital thermometer.

Summary Comment

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has not addressed the non-compliance for regulation 23 as up to date garda vetting for 1 staff member has not been submitted to the Inspectorate.

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the remainder of the non-compliances for regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Non-Compliance Information

(3)(b) In the Junior 1 room 2 staff members did not sign in on the attendance book.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(3)(b) A meeting was held with the staff members and the importance of signing in and out discussed.

Management will monitor this practice on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Not required as retrospective signed in observed on the day of inspection.

Summary Comment

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliance for regulation 24. The response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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 had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

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 fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 09/03/2023.
- (b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment on the premises. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 17/01/2024. The firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 14/08/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed 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 registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 70 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2024 to the 27th March 2025.