

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO050
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Name of Service:	Saints & Scholars Creche & Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Unit 4 Airport Business Park, Strandhill, Sligo, Co. Sligo
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Eircode:	F91 K728
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Name of Registered Provider:	Colette Carter
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	101	PM	89
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello and K Folan
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).

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Description of service

Saints & Scholars Creche & Montessori School is a privately owned service in Strandhill, Co Sligo. The service is registered to provide full day care, parttime and sessional services to children aged from 0 to 6 years of age. The registered opening hours are from 08:00-18:00 hours. The service is based in business units in an industrial park. There are three separate entrances at the front of the units and seven playrooms are provided for the preschool service. One unit contains the Montessori 3 and Montessori Junior playrooms located at ground floor level. A second unit contains the Toddler, Toddler 1 and Toddler playrooms on the first floor and a third unit contains the Montessori Senior and Toddler 3 playrooms. Sanitary facilities, a kitchen, staff room and offices are provided on the premises. A large enclosed outdoor area is available at the side of the unit.

Staffing

Twenty-two adults are employed in the service, this includes the registered provider, a bus driver, an administrative assistant, kitchen staff and seventeen adults working directly with the preschool 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 26 and 25. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN IAN1522	23/04/2026	Evidence of International police vetting was not available for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of more than six consecutive months and had direct access to children
Status	Action was taken by the registered provider immediately following service of the notice and the provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate	

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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)

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

(b)

The person in charge was present throughout the duration of the inspection.

(2) (a) (b).

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that 8 new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection.

Twelve written and verified past employer references and two written and verified references from an other source in the absence of a past employer were available.

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(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all twenty-two staff.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was available for six adults who had resided outside the country for a period of six months or more as an adult.

(4)

Documentary evidence was presented to demonstrate that seven staff members had obtained 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

Two adults did not have a second reference from a past employer or a reputable source in the absence of past employment.

(2) (d)

See Statutory notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN1522 served.

(3)

A review of documentation evidenced that the requirements of Regulation 9(2) had not been completed prior to staff members being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the preschool service as outlined above under point 2(a)(b) and 2 (d).

(4)

One adult who did not hold a qualification in Early Childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national qualification's framework was observed to be working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(2)(a)(b)

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Second references obtained and validated. These will be in place prior to an employee having access to a preschool child.

(2)(d)

The staff member without international police clearance has been taken out of her position working directly with preschool children. Future staff will be informed at interview that it is a requirement for the recruitment process to move forward to have international police clearance received. C.v's will be examined more closely to see gaps and ask for explanations re travel and living abroad for longer than 6 months, consecutively

(3)

The early years inspection notebook has been downloaded from the Tusla website, and the Regulation 9 Management and recruitment table is being checked against staff files to ensure all requirements are met. This will be reviewed regularly.

(4)

The staff member who did not hold a qualification in early childhood care and education was taken out of circulation with early years children. A letter of proof of a student's status will be obtained from relevant colleges to state they are students on work experience prior to commencing work experience.

Supporting documentation submitted

- References submitted.
- Application for international police vetting.
- File checklist

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider to address the non-compliances found on inspection have been reviewed and accepted. This regulation is now compliant.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1)

There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were 21 adults working directly with 101 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection and 19 adults working directly with 89 children in the afternoon. There was an additional staff member available to cover breaks throughout the day.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children ratio were provided on the day of the inspection in accordance with the required ratio considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in 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

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

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Basic Needs:

- The registered provider described how they provide balanced meals and snacks each day. This was further evidenced by a review of the menu plan, a discussion with the chef and staff members and observation of dinner in the Toddler Room. The main meal of the day served was roast chicken, cauliflower and mash potato with gravy. Drinks of water were served alongside the meal.
- Snacks were brought in from home in line with the service healthy eating policy. These included wraps, sandwiches, fruit and yoghurts. Drinking water was freely available throughout the day and stored on shelving easily accessible to children in all care rooms.
- Children were observed to be supervised at mealtimes with staff members sitting alongside the children, engaged in conversation and offering support and encouragement if required.
- The sleep needs of the younger children were met, this was observed on the day by children sleeping as required as per need. The baby room had a designated sleep room with six standard cots and individual bed linen. Toddler 1 sleep room contained 10 standard cots which were labelled with each child's name. Individual bed linen was available for each child. Sleep was monitored by physical checks from staff a minimum of every ten minutes.
- The older children who required sleep were brought to one of the care rooms where the room was darkened, and soft music played to support sleep and rest. Staff members remained in this room throughout.

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- The younger children's nappies were changed at structured times throughout the day and as required. Nappy changes were observed to be an opportunity for one-to-one engagement with the young child.
- Older children were encouraged to use the bathroom independently and staff members were in ear shot to prompt and support children if required.

Physical and Material Environment:

- All care rooms were equipped with a wide range of materials and resources to suit the age and stage of development of the child using the room.
- Sensory experiences were facilitated for the child through arts and crafts and sensory tables including water and rice. Fine motor development was supported using jigsaws, pins and threading puzzles. Opportunities for imaginary and role play were provided with home corners and dress up area as well as construction area and farm animal areas. Musical toys and resources were provided in accordance with the child's age. All rooms had extensive libraries with books suitable to the stage of development.
- All equipment was stored on open shelving at children's heights so that choice can be facilitated.
- The outdoor area provided an alternative area for play and gross motor skill development. This area was equipped with a variety of resources including bikes and trikes, tyres, climbing frames, playhouses and mud kitchens.
- Through discussion with staff, it was evident that the children spent time outside daily and outdoor play is promoted. Children spent time outside during the inspection in line with the roster which was on display.

Programme of Activities:

- There was clear evidence of the children's learnings and curriculum displayed on the walls of the care rooms.
- Children had a key work system in place where a designated staff member was responsible for observations and goal setting of individual children and recording these observations in individual journals.
- On the day children showed the inspector their 'butterfly garden' where children were learning about the life cycle of the caterpillar and were hoping that the butterflies would be out of the cocoons in time for the children's graduation.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff members throughout the service were observed to be kind and gentle in their interactions with the preschool children.

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- Staff were observed to have an interest in the curriculum for preschool children, taking lead from the children as to what their interests were and adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the child.
- Where children required additional supports, effort were made to ensure inclusiveness. The service demonstrated evidence of working with specialist and families, adapting the service environment to support integration and a positive learning experience for all children.

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 into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins stored out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning schedules displayed and up to date in each care room.

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- Children were observed to wash their hands regularly including before snacks and meals.
- Child friendly hand wash posters with picture instructions were placed above the wash basins.

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with staff members, they were knowledgeable about the service medication policy.
- Detailed support plans were in place for children with medical needs.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had two designated sleep rooms with a total of 16 standard cots.
- The sleep room temperature measured 18.7°C on the day of inspection which is line with the required safe sleep temperatures.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation procedures were clearly displayed throughout the service.
- Emergency evacuation routes were hazard free on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) A drum of glue stored on a low-level shelf was accessible to preschool children in the Montessori room which could pose a safety risk if accessed unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- (2) Hand hygiene was not routinely carried out after nappy changes in the Toddler 1 room.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

In a written response the registered provider stated:

1. The glue has been removed to a storeroom.

Infection Control:

2. Staff members have been retrained and reminded on hand hygiene. Management will spot check this regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- No evidence submitted.

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Infection Control:

- No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider have been reviewed and accepted.
This regulation is now compliant.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (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 of fire drills was kept by the service with the most recent drill carried out on 16 March 2026.

(1) (b)

Records were available to evidence that the firefighting equipment was last serviced in November 2025 and smoke alarms were serviced on 11 April 2026.

(2)(c)

The registered provider ensured the records were available for inspection.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the service.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service provided adequate certification of insurance for a full day care service for 178 children up until the 27 March 2027.