

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO050
Name of Service:	Saints & Scholars Creche & Montessori School
Address of Service:	Unit 4 Airport Business Park, Strandhill, Sligo, Co. Sligo
Eircode:	F91 K728
Name of Registered Provider:	Colette Carter
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
Date 1 of Inspection:	24 /07/2024
Date 2 of Inspection:	25/07/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	80	PM	76
Day 2	AM	71	PM	n/a

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 M Farrell
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

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.

Staffing

At the time of the inspection there were 32 staff working in the service including managerial staff, childcare staff, a chef, administrative staff and a bus driver. The registered provider works directly in the service.

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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 25; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed significant risk was identified under Regulation 22. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the persons in charge, staff and children who were present on the days 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.

Compliance Information

(1)

- (a) The registered provider was one of two named persons in charge in the service. There was an additional named person to deputise for the person in charge in the event of their absence.
- (b) One of the persons in charge was present throughout the inspection that took place over two days. Discussion with the staff found that either the of the persons in charge or a named deputy were present at all times when the service was in operation.

(2)

During discussion with the designated persons in charge and review of documentation it was confirmed that there were thirty-two staff working in the service. The vetting files for these staff were reviewed and the following information was available for them:

- (a) Two written, validated references from past employers particularly their most recent employer for 21 adults. There was one written, validated reference from a past employer for 6 adults.
- (b) There was one written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for 3 adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 32 adults. However, the service did not always 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) The required international police vetting was available on file for 9 adults.

(4)

Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for 24 adults who worked directly with the preschool children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a)

A validated reference from the most recent past employer was required for 8 adults employed in the service.

(d)

International police vetting was required for 5 adults who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

A provisional statement of results was on file for one adult where the final statement of results or certification is required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

In a written response the registered provider stated:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) All 8 missing references from most recent employers have been received now from staff in question and all validated. New staff will have to provide the references prior to commencing employment.

(d) All staff in question have applied for the International child protection certificate. Management were unaware of this new requirement and thought the police clearance basic, was sufficient for compliance. Application for this international child protection certificate be completed prior to recruitment in future.

(4) The service are still awaiting the final statement of results for this staff member; the college has been made aware of the need for this statement. In future the service will endeavour to have final certification before recruitment.

Supporting documentation submitted

(a) Documentary evidence submitted.

(d) Documentary evidence submitted.

(4) Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on 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) There were 17 adults working directly with 80 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service on day one. On the second day of inspection there were 18 adults working with 71 children when the inspectors arrived at the service.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided in all seven playrooms during the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service. Additional staff members including the designated persons in charge and the wellbeing officer provided relief cover for staff breaks.
- (8) (a) There were at least two adults always present in the service during the unannounced inspection.

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) Activities were planned by staff in the service with daily routine plans displayed on playroom walls. Attention was given to the children's ages and developmental stages and children's individual needs for rest/sleep, toileting/ nappy changing, personal care and play were considered by staff. Rest areas with soft seating were provided in the playrooms. After dinner the children in the Montessori 3 playroom had a quiet rest time in the rest area of the playroom which had soft furnishing and mats. One of the staff read a book to children and when they became restless the staff member asked them if they would like to play outdoors which the children agreed to. The younger children in the toddler room had their sleep needs met on an individual basis. Staff responded to the cues of the children and one child had a morning nap due to having an unsettled night previously and was displaying signs of tiredness. Other children in the room went for the regular structured sleep which is after dinner. There is two designated sleep rooms which area adjacent to the toddler room and toddler room 3. These sleep rooms are equipped with standard cots. Toddler 2 room is also used for sleep time for children over two. Floor beds are provided and arranged on the floor of the Toddler 2 room. Staff members were observed supporting

children to sleep by turning down the lights and speaking in a low soft voice. Where children chose not to sleep, they were supported to access the toddler 3 room for play.

Older children used the toilet by themselves when they needed to with staff within earshot if help was needed. Younger children had their nappies changed in a timely manner. Nappy time was observed to be a pleasant experience for the child, where staff members took the time as an opportunity to have a positive interaction with the child.

The staff in the Montessori rooms were observed to prompt children to wash and dry their hands before and after meals and after using the toilet. Help was given by staff to younger children where needed.

Children were encouraged to put on coats by themselves before playing outdoors supporting development of their independence.

A main meal of mashed potato, cabbage, gravy and boiled bacon was provided. Staff worked in partnership with parents and children were facilitated to eat food from home if preferred.

Older children sat in groups at tables to eat their snacks and main meal supervised closely by staff.

The staff throughout the service were observed to interact positively and engage with the children and involve in themselves in the play activities. Children were observed to be comforted by staff if upset.

Positive methods were used by staff to encourage and support children's behaviour. The service's behaviour management policy was displayed on a wall in the Montessori Junior playroom to guide staff. A "choice" system in picture form allowing children to make positive choices was in place and used in the Montessori Junior playroom to help support children to control and manage their behaviour. Staff from the Montessori 3 room prepared children for transitions for example when dinnertime was approaching and outdoor play time finishing.

Staff kept records of the progress of each child through the service including photographs, observations and comments in individual "My Early Learning Journals" which they said were shared with parents. The staff were observed to greet parents/guardians warmly at collection times and share information with them. Meetings had been held by staff in April for parents of children attending the Montessori Senior playroom to update parents on their children's progress.

A wide range of play equipment and toys to support different areas of development and learning was provided in all the playrooms. The equipment was accessible to children allowing them to choose items that they would like to play with. The children were observed to play with toys to support fine motor development including coloured magnets and linking figures in the Montessori Junior playroom. Children enjoyed messy play with gloop which the staff made using a mixture of cornflower and water in the

Montessori 3 playroom. Some children in the Montessori Junior room played with playdough and cutters and at water and sand tables. Artwork that the children had made was displayed on playroom walls for example the “a splash of art” display in the Montessori senior playroom. Colourful “Teddy bear passports” were made by children and staff in the Montessori Senior playroom on day one reflecting the playroom’s theme for the week displayed on a notice board in the room. The staff had organised a bear hunt earlier in the week and had planned a teddy bear’s picnic. The books read for the children by the staff during the week were based on bear themes.

The children from Montessori 3 and Montessori Junior rooms played outside together on both days in one of the outdoor play areas directly accessible from playrooms. The outdoor area had ground cover of artificial grass and a range of outdoor toys to play with. Some of the children played on ride on toys, others kicked balls and a group of children played at a mud kitchen. Several children coloured on a plywood partition using chalk. There was a large parasol in the area to provide shelter from the sun and seating available if children wished to sit and rest for a while.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

Food provision in the service consisted of one hot meal provided by the service and snacks provided from home. This provision is insufficient to meet the needs of the preschool children as evidenced in a room between 15:44 and 16:05 where one child was distressed and appeared hungry. This child was observed by the inspector taking food from the other children’s plate and picking up crumbs from the floor and eating them.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service have amended their Healthy eating policy, to include a further meal between 4pm and 4:30pm The service will offer a second helping always if a child appears hungry once finished their meal/ snack, in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on 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:

Either the main entrance doors to the three units or the playroom doors were secured to allow the staff to control access to the service and prevent children from leaving. The inspectors were admitted to the service by staff following production of their identification documents and signing of the visitor record book. There was a secured gate at the rear of the premises to prevent children from leaving unnoticed via a fire exit door at the rear of the building. The toys and equipment in the playrooms were in good conditions. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of children in a sluice room off the Montessori 3 playroom or on high shelving in the playrooms. Individually labelled supplies of suncream were available and stored out of reach of the children in playrooms.

Infection Control:

The service was found to be clean on inspection with the staff keeping records of the cleaning processes undertaken by them in line with the service's cleaning schedules on an electronic system. The cleaning records were up to date and made available to the inspectors by the staff on request. Toys that children had mouthed were observed to be taken by staff for cleaning after use for example in the Montessori Senior playroom. Disposable aprons and gloves were provided for staff to wear during nappy changes in accordance with the service's policy.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was observed to be stored on high shelving at room temperature in the Montessori 3 playroom in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. Medication was not observed to administered to children by the staff during the inspection.

Safe Sleep:

Stackable beds or sleep mats were provided for children aged over two years to rest on in the sleep room located next to the Toddler 3 playroom. The air temperature of the sleep room was recorded at 19.9°C within the required range of 18-22°C for the age range of children using the sleep room. Information regarding safe sleep was displayed on the walls in the sleep room to guide staff.

The sleep needs of the younger children were met, staff responded to the cues of the individual child and sleep patterns varied throughout the day as individual needs were responded to. Individual standard cots were provided in the Toddler room with air temperature recorded on the day of 19.5 °C. Children's sleep was monitored and recorded on the services application where parents could receive instant updates.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exit routes including the stairways were observed to be unobstructed during the inspection.

Outing:

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On day one of the inspection, the gates to the outdoor area and external door between the area and the Montessori 3 playroom were not secured to prevent people from entering the service without authorisation. At 12:58 hours an adult was observed to enter the playroom from outside through the unsecured gates and external playroom door to collect a child. When this was highlighted by the inspectors to the staff, they took immediate action to secure the door to allow staff to control access. On day two of inspection when the inspectors arrived at the service, the gates to the outdoor area had a securing mechanism in place to allow staff to control people entering and leaving the area. A sign had been erected at the gate to inform parents/guardians of the new procedures in relation to entering the premises.
2. The base of the large plastic slide in outdoor area was damaged with potential pinch points visible for children leading to a risk of injury of a child.
3. There was container of shaving foam in the Montessori 3 playroom that the staff informed the inspector was used in play activities with paint by the children. Shaving foam should not be used as play material by children as it poses a risk of injury.
4. A rodent bait box was accessible to children in one of the outdoor play areas and posed a potential risk to children using the area.

Infection Control:

5. Perishable foods in children's snacks were not always stored in accordance with requirements under 5°C. Foods containing meat were found to be stored at room temperature in the Montessori 3 playroom on day one of the inspection.
6. A waste bin in one the adult sanitary units was an open bin and not the required foot pedal operated bin. The pedal was missing from the foot pedal bin in the nappy change area used by the Montessori Junior and Montessori 3 playrooms and required replacement. It is acknowledged that these bins were replaced on day 2 of inspection.
7. Children's hands were not routinely washed after nappy changes in the Toddler 2 room.
8. A floor mat in the toddler room had torn edges with exposed foam, therefore this could not be cleaned effectively.

Safe Sleep:

9. The mattresses provided did not have the required waterproof cover to ensure effective cleaning after use.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. A new combination lock has been fitted to the gate to the play area at the side of the building. Only staff have the combination code so parents and public do not have access to the side entrance. This securing mechanism will remain in place on the side gate.
2. The large slide with broken plastic has been removed from the play area and a new slide provided. A risk assessment will be carried out daily in the play area to remove any damaged toys
3. Shaving foam removed from the sensory products provided. Staff will update themselves on any toxins in sensory play products and discontinue usage if they are found to contain them .
4. The pest control company have been informed that the bait boxes cannot be used in the play area.

Infection Control:

5. Zip lock bags are provided for the perishable items to be taken from the child's bags labelled and stored in the fridge in the adjacent room ready for use.
6. Bins were replaced on the day of inspection.
7. All staff attended a staff meeting following the draft report and informed about the importance of handwashing after nappy changing. New staff will be instructed on handwashing for adults and children

8. Mats with torn edges were removed and new mats were provided to replace them. Staff were informed of completing a risk assessment on all furniture and soft furnishings.

Safe Sleep:

9. New waterproof covers were purchased from and applied to all mattresses. Management will check that these covers remain intact. Staff were informed not to remove the waterproof covers and wipe regularly with disinfectant spray

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.
3. Documentary evidence submitted.
4. Documentary evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

5. Photographic evidence
6. Observed on Day 2 of inspection.
7. Documentary evidence submitted.
8. Documentary evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

9. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately addressed the non-compliance found on inspection

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) Certificates of the completion of First Aid Response (FAR) training courses were available for four staff members in the service.
- (2)
 - (a) Appropriately stocked first aid boxes were safely stored in an easily accessible locations in the playrooms.
 - (b) The first aid equipment was readily accessible to the staff if a child needed first aid treatment