

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017CC503
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Name of Service:	Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre
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Address of Service:	Presentation Secondary School, Joe Murphy Road, Ballyphehane, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T12 YH04
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sherene Powell
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	08/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM	32
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Office, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurranabraher, Cork. T23X440.
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter and S O Brien.
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

Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre is a privately run early years service registered to provide full day care for children aged from 1- 6 years. The service is based in the basement area of the Presentation Secondary School in Ballyphehane Cork. Daily opening hours are from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

It has four care rooms in operation, namely, Snowdrops room (1- 2-year-olds), Mayflower room (2- 3-year-olds), ASD room (autism spectrum disorder) known as the Blossom room, and Violets room (3- 4-year-olds). The Blossom room was closed on the day of inspection. There is a dedicated sleep room and an outdoor area. The service is one of five services operated by the registered provider nationally.

Staffing

There are 16 adults attached to the service. The registered provider is not based in the service. On the day of inspection, 11 staff members working directly with the children and 1 student who was carrying out work placement were present.

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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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, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN 1161	08/04/2026	On review of the staff roster it was evident that a person trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) was not available to children at all times.
Status	The registered 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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) There was a designated person in charge in the service and a named person who was able to deputise if needed.
- (b) The designated person in charge and the named person was on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

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(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that four new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. The file of one student was also reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for one staff member whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review. A total of six files were reviewed.

(a) Three of the ten required references available were from a past employer and were validated.

(b) Seven of the ten required references available were from another source and were validated.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff and the student. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting disclosures were available for four staff members who had lived outside of Ireland for longer than six consecutive months.

(4) Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent was on file for two staff members and two staff members held a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, the following policies were examined:

- Managing behaviour policy.

The above policy was observed to contain the relevant details to guide the staff with their care practices.

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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.

(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) The registered provider has ensured that an adequate number of staff are working directly with the children at all times.
- (2) The adult to child ratios met the requirements of the regulation. The Blossom room was closed on the day of inspection, and the remaining rooms were in operation as follows:

Room name	Type of Service	Age Range	Number of children present	Number of adults required	Number of adults present
Snowdrops	Full day care	1-2 years	Am: 3 Pm: 5	1 1	2 2
Violets	Full day care	3-4.5 years	Am: 14 Pm: 18	2 3	3 3
Mayflowers	Full day care	2-3 years	Am: 7 Pm: 9	2 2	2 2

(8) (a) The service was operated with at least two adults present at all times, as indicated through review of the staff roster.

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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;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider has ensured that a record was kept in relation to:

- (i) A staff roster was maintained with details of all staff start, finish and break times.
- (k) The registered provider has ensured that a record has been kept of any incident or accident involving a child. On the day of inspection, a sample of 12 were reviewed from the Violet room which were found to have been shared with parents or guardians.

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*
- (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) Basic needs

- The children were observed freely moving around the care rooms partaking in activities of choice.
- There was ample play resources for each child.
- The children were observed spending time in the outdoor area.
- A supply of boots and warm outdoor coats were available to the children.

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- Individual water bottles were available to the children in the care rooms and were located on child height shelving.
- The children in the Violet room were supported with toileting and hand washing as needed. The staff were observed carrying out nappy changing at regular intervals and as needed.
- The children were observed having fruit, vegetables, pancakes, rice cakes and yoghurt for morning snack. The children were observed requesting additional snacks from the staff and this was accommodated.
- Mealtimes were spread evenly throughout the day to ensure children's needs were met.

Supporting relationships

- The staff in the Violet room were observed interacting with the children in a kind and respectful manner. The staff were observed communicating with the children and ensured they were at the child's level. The staff had visual cards that were used when children could not express themselves verbally.
- The staff in the Violet room were observed sitting with the children during snack time and allowed the children time to enjoy their food.
- Through direct observation and documentation available in the day, it was evident that a key worker system was in place in each care room.
- The children in the Mayflower room were observed to have their care needs in relation to nappy changing met with kindness. Staff were observed to chat freely with the children during nappy changing time.
- Each care room had a birthday chart and family wall, along with artwork created by the children. This ensured that the child's voice was heard and there was a sense of community within the service.
- The service communicated with parents through the use of an electronic application (app), examples of what was communicated to parents are sleep times, meals consumed and toileting needs.

Non-Compliance Information

(b)

1. From 12.33pm to 12.45pm in Snowdrops room, staff were observed to not adequately meet the care needs of all the children in the room. Staff were observed not responding to the children's needs when displaying cues of tiredness and not responding to the children's non-verbal cues of communication. Examples observed included:
 - A child was observed to push their meal away and cry while rubbing their eyes. Rather than comfort the child, the staff members continued to feed other children. The child proceeded to lie on the floor and cry. During this 12-minute period, staff persisted in cleaning up after the meal and feeding other children.

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After 12 minutes a staff member was heard to state “I’m tired too” in response to the child. No further reassurances were offered to the child. The staff were observed to not listen to the voice of the child when the children were communicating their needs. This posed a risk to the children’s wellbeing.

2. Between 12:33pm and 12:50pm, staff in the Snowdrops room were observed to not work well together as a team. This posed a risk to the children’s wellbeing. Examples observed included:

- A staff member ignoring a student on placement when they asked for guidance regarding the care of the children; and
 - A staff member ignoring a request from management to clean children’s faces following their hot meal.
- This posed a risk to the children’s wellbeing.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1.

The registered provider has stated in her written response that staff have been reminded of the importance of responding to children’s needs promptly. Staff members have been afforded time for reflective practice during supervision and have revisited the services policy on responding to children’s cues. Each room has been given a radio to communicate to management when extra staff are needed to help with the direct care of children.

2.

The importance of shared responsibility and clear communication within the room has been re-emphasised, particularly during busy routine periods. During supervision and team meetings staff have been reminded of the existing expectations around teamwork, communication, and professional practice.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of radio communication devices.

Signed evidence of staff re-training.

Minutes of a staff meeting.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 19 (1) (b) has been adequately addressed. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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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:

- Entry to the service is restricted to prevent the unauthorised entry to the premises or the unsupervised exit of a child from the premises.
- Low level windows and doors were fitted with visibility strips.
- Blind cords were secured on all windows.
- Highchairs in the Snowdrop room were in good condition and fitted with safety harnesses.
- Flexes and cables were observed to be out of reach of children.
- Cleaning agents were stored on high shelves.
- Pull cords in the sanitary accommodation was safely secured.
- The outdoor area was securely fenced to prevent unauthorised access.
- Refrigerators in each care room were fitted with a child lock.
- Grapes for the mid-morning snack were observed to be cut in such a way that they did not pose a choking hazard.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use throughout the service.
- Staff were observed to sanitize tables prior to meal times.
- Staff were observed to sanitize the nappy changing mats after each use.
- Children's hands were washed after each nappy change.
- Each bathroom and nappy changing area were fitted with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels. Water temperatures were recorded between 37.9°C and 42.1°C which allowed for effective hand washing.
- Staff wore disposable gloves and aprons while changing children's nappies.
- Perishable food was safely refrigerated.
- Windows were open in the care rooms to aid natural ventilation.

Safe Sleep:

- Cots were spaced the required 50cm apart.

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- The air temperature in the sleep room was measured at 19.1°C.
- Staff were seen to remain in the sleep room while children were falling asleep.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were clear and unobstructed.
- Wall tethered firefighting equipment was available throughout the service.
- A fire evacuation plan was available in each room of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. In Snowdrop room, a staff member was observed to wipe their nose repeatedly on her gloves while feeding a child their hot dinner. This posed a risk of cross infection to the children.
2. A staff member was observed to not wash their hands when they finished changing a nappy, which posed a risk of cross infection to the children.
3. The cots in the sleep room were not fitted with waterproof mattress protectors, which posed a risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1 and 2.

In her written response the registered provider stated that staff have been retrained in the importance of correct hand-washing procedures. The registered provider further stated that reminders have been placed in care rooms and sanitary areas.

3.

In her written response, the registered provider has stated that cots would be fitted with waterproof mattress protectors and routine checks of the sleep room would ensure compliance going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

Signed copies of staff training documents.

Photographs of cot mattresses fitted with waterproof mattress protectors.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

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

Compliance Information

(1) The person in charge ensured that each pre-school child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by an employee on the day of inspection.

(3)

(a) The registered provider has ensured that any person other than an employee, a preschool child of a person dropping the child off cannot gain entry to the premises

(b) The Inspectors were asked to sign the visitors book on arrival, and it was evident that a record is kept of any such person who enters the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

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Compliance Information

- (2) Each care room contained a first aid bag which was:
- (a) Adequately stocked, securely stored and accessible at all times.
 - (b) Available to the children at all times throughout the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) See statutory notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN 1161 served.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*

Compliance Information

- (d) The registered provider has ensured that the premises is clean, well maintained and in a state of good repair. There was a cleaning schedule in place in each care room, and the service was visibly clean on the day of the inspection.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*

- (3) *A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-*
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) Written records of complaints were available for review by the inspectors.
 - (b) The written records outlined how each complaint was dealt with and ensured the complainant was informed.

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(3)

- (a) The written records outlined the nature of the complaints and how the complaint was dealt with.
- (b) The written records were open to inspection by the inspectors.