

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 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(s) of Inspection:	08/05/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Admin Building, St Marys Health Campus, Cork, T23X440
Inspection undertaken by:	M.O' Reilly
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre is a privately owned full day care service, that also provides part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years and currently caters for children from the age of 12 months and children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily opening hours are from 8am to 6.00pm each day Monday to Friday

The service operates from one part of the ground floor in Presentation Secondary School in Ballyphehane, Cork. The facility is located in an enclosed separate area beside the existing school. This part of the ground floor of the school has been revamped and refurbished to provide an early years service. The service consists of four playrooms named the Snowdrops room (wobbler room), Mayflower room (toddler room), Blossom Room for the morning session and known as the Lavender room for the afternoon session, ASD room (autism spectrum disorder) and Violets room, (Montessori room) (ECCE). There is a designated separate sleep room, a kitchenette, entrance hall, a staff room and a storeroom, adult and children's toilets and nappy changing facilities. There is an outdoor play area beside the service.

Staffing

There were 15 adults associated with the service. The registered provider is not service based. The person in a management position and twelve staff that work directly with the early years children including the person in charge they all hold a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent qualification, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications. There is one auxiliary staff member who is not required to have a childcare qualification.

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 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(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 is a named person in charge and a deputy to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge was present when the inspector arrived at the premise and remained on site for the remainder of the inspection.

(2)

Fifteen staff files were reviewed. This included the registered provider, one staff in a management roll, and twelve staff that works directly with the children including the person in charge plus one auxiliary staff member in the service.

(a) There were seventeen references on file from past employers in respect of the adults.

(b) There were nine references from sources other than past employers in respect of the adults.

- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of each of the fifteen adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Seven police vetting records were available on file for the seven adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of six months or more, while over the age of eighteen years.
- (4)
The twelve adults who worked directly with the children all held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, or an equivalent qualification, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
(a)(b)
- Four written and validated references were not on file for two of the adults.
 - One reference was not validated for one adult.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

In the written response received, the following was stated by the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a)(b)

The required references and validations not present at time of inspection are now on file in the service. The manager is responsible for ensuring that all vetting records have been received prior to an adult commencing in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of the four references and five validations were forwarded to the early years inspector and deemed satisfactory.

Summary Comment

Correspondence received was deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 9, (2) (a), (b) of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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)
The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in each room on day of the inspection.

(2)
During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children in each playroom. It was observed that the person in charge relieved staff for lunch in the Mayflower Room and another staff member relieved staff for lunch from the Lavender room.

Snowdrops room

There were four children present in the morning and in the afternoon. The four children were aged between 1 and 2 years with one adult in attendance at all times.

Mayflower Room

There were nine children in attendance in the morning and in the afternoon. The nine children were aged between 2 years 3 years with two adults in attendance.

Violets Room

There were four children present in the morning and three in the afternoon aged three years plus with one adult in attendance.

Blossom Room am/Lavender Room pm. ASD room (autism spectrum disorder)

There were six children present in the morning and four in the afternoon aged between 3 years plus to 6 years with four adults in attendance in the morning and afternoon session.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) to (i)

A sample of 12 of the children's registration forms. were reviewed and found to contain all of the elements of information as required by Regulation 15 (a) to (i) inclusive.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

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

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

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- Up to five daily meal breaks were facilitated at the early years service, breakfast, a mid-morning snack, a hot lunch meal, an afternoon snack, and an evening snack. This ensured that there were no gaps longer than two hours in between the children's mealtimes.
- The children appeared to enjoy the food offered and were afforded ample time to eat and drink at a relaxed pace. Staff members were readily available to provide assistance and reminders at this time and ensured that suitable crockery and cutlery were available, as well as feeding bibs for the younger children.
- Shortly after eating lunch, the children in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms were facilitated to sleep as needed, during a scheduled rest period. Children who did not wish to sleep were accommodated to participate in activities in the Violets room.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff advised the inspector that the service operated in partnership with parents, with an online application where staff record the details of their child's day while in the service for example meals/snacks, activities, and sleep.
- Staff were observed to interact in a caring manner with the children building their confidence and communication skills within the setting.
- The adults were observed to demonstrate patience and kindness in their interactions with the children, as was noted when the children's efforts were readily acknowledged and when children were calmly assisted to resolve minor conflicts.

Physical and Material Environment

- The four rooms in operation were child friendly, bright, and spacious and laid out with special interest areas with materials largely accessible to the children.
- The Wobbler Room had adequate space for children to roll and crawl and walk. Colourful, sensory, and sound making age-appropriate play equipment was available. Other play equipment included books, blocks, handheld toys, balls, dolls and wall mirrors and a wooden tent.
- Toddler Room had interest areas that included soft area with a wall mounted book rack, home corner, construction/block, and a fine motor area.
- The Montessori/preschool room had a range of Montessori and play-based materials and equipment that offered stimulation, exploration, and imagination. They were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play and movement.
- Child sized tables and chairs were available in each room and a number of highchairs were available in the Wobbler room as required.
- Each room had a designated cosy areas for children to rest and relax as required. There was adequate space in the care rooms to accommodate a variety of play activities.
- There was a designated outdoor play area provided beside the premise. The outdoor play area has a combination of an all-weather, hard and a natural grass surface. Play equipment in the outdoor area included slides, see-saws, play balls and a sand container with accompanying play equipment.
- Outdoor play was observed during the inspection. The children had access to the outdoor play area which operated in a rota system with the other playrooms within the service.

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

- A catering company provided the main hot meal to the service which was reheated on site. The food was served to the children by the adults in the service. All the other food and snacks consumed on the premise is provided by the service.
- It was observed that the children were served thin slices of apple, beans and a buttered bread roll with water to drink at the mid-morning snack provided by the service. Adequate portions of pasta in a tomato sauce were served to the children at lunch time. It was reported that some of the children had specific dietary requirements and separate dishes were provided for these children as observed on day of inspection. Water was available as a drink.
- The children were provided with appropriate cutlery and crockery at snack and mealtimes.
- Fridges were available for the storage of perishable items in all the playrooms.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children within the care rooms outside of allocated mealtimes.

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:

- Upon the inspectors' arrival at the service, the main entrance gate that allows entry to the outdoor play area and the main entrance door was found to have been secured and was maintained secure when not in use.
- Cleaning agents were stored on high-level shelving, out of the children's reach.
- First aid boxes were appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- Restrictive opening devices were in place on the low-level cupboards and fridges in all playrooms.
- Emergency fire exit doors were unobstructed.

- No cables were visibly within reach of children on the day of inspection.
- The outdoor area was noted to be fully enclosed and secured with block walls and fences and the two gates are adequately secured.
- The visible roots of a large tree located in part of the surface of the outdoor play area has been completely cornered off by a wooden fence ensuring children have no access to same

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities were available across the care rooms toilet and nappy changing facilities. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were in place. Handwashing by the children was observed after toileting and outdoor play and before lunch in the Mayflower and Violet rooms.
- Within the nappy changing areas, there was individually labelled storage for the children's toiletries.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- Cleaning records were in place in each of the rooms.

Safe Sleep:

- Ten-minute sleep checks were recorded in writing for each sleeping child by the adults monitoring the sleeping children. The records reflected physical checks in relation to the colour, breathing and position of children, as they slept.
- The children aged under 2 years rest needs were facilitated in one designated sleep room for the children in the Snowdrops room. There were adequate numbers of designated standard cots with safety mattresses for children under two that required a sleep with individual accompanying bed linen.
- Each of the safety mattresses was covered with a waterproof mattress cover.
- The children rest needs were met during a planned sleeping period when stacking beds were set up in the Mayflower room.
- There were a sufficient number of stacking beds and padded sleeping floor mats available with designated suitable bed linen for each child over 2 years who wanted a sleep while attending the service. There was an adequate distance between each stacking bed/sleeping floor mat as observed on day of inspection.
- The air temperature reading of the sleep room when the children were observed sleeping was within the normal range of 17°C. The Toddler room where the children were observed sleeping was within the normal range of 19.0°C. Accepted air temperature range is between 16°C and 20°C for rooms where children are sleeping.

Outing:

Not applicable, as an outing was not observed.

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) There were four of the five adults present on day of inspection with a current certified First Aid Responder certificate (FAR).

(2)

(a) The first aid boxes were safely stored out of children's reach in the service.

(b) The first aid boxes were available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 03/05/24.

(b)The service had maintained a record detailing the number and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment in the service. The firefighting equipment had been last serviced in 22/01/2024. and smoke alarm systems were checked and was last serviced on the 31/04/2024.

(4)
The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for 30 children until 27/03/2025. The records detailed the category of service covered which was full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(c)The four care rooms were provided with a combination of natural light, through windows and artificial lighting. Adequate lighting was also in place in the sanitary facilities and passageway, as supplied through artificial lighting. Light fittings were noted to have protective covers installed. The openable windows in the four care rooms allowed for a supply of fresh air. Toilet and nappy changing areas were ventilated by means of natural and mechanical ventilation.

The air conditioning unit in the sleep room was assisting in maintaining the air temperature range within the normal range of between 16°C and 20°C. The air temperature reading in the sleep room when the children were observed sleeping was within the normal range of 17°C.

(e) There were four children's toilets and two nappy changing units, and six wash hand basins available in the service. Staff had access to two designated toilets and wash hand basins in the building.

Non-Compliance Information

(d)

1. The surface edging around one of the child size tables in use was rough in the Mayflower room therefore it was not easy to clean increasing the potential risk of cross infection.
2. There was no toilet seat on one of the children's toilets beside the Violet room

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

In the written response received, the following was stated by the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d)

1. The table in poor repair was removed. The service had an adequate number of child size tables in the service to replace the table that was removed. The service will ensure that a continuous risk assessment is done on all equipment and any defective equipment is removed once detected and replaced immediately.
2. A toilet seat was fitted to the bowl of the children's toilet located beside the Violet room. The service will ensure that all toilet facilities are checked on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

(d)

1. Correspondence received from the registered provider stating the issue was addressed was accepted as evidence
2. Photographic evidence of the toilet seat in place was forwarded to the early years inspector and deemed satisfactory.

Summary Comment

Correspondence received was deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 29 (d) 1. + 2. of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.