

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017CC503
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre
-------------------------	------------------------------------

Address of Service:	Presentation Secondary School, Joe Murphy Road, Ballyphehane, Cork
----------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------

Eircode:	T12 YH04
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Sherene Powell
-------------------------------------	----------------

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

Dates of Inspection:	16/06/2025
-----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	37	PM	32
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Administration Building, St Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork T23 X440
-------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Inspection undertaken by:	M Creagh & 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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
---------------------------------	-----

Description of service

Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre is a privately run early years service registered to provide full day care, part time and sessional 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- 2year olds), Mayflower room (2- 3 year olds), ASD room (autism spectrum disorder) known as the Blossom room for the morning session and the Lavender room for the afternoon session, and Violets room (3- 4 year olds). There is a dedicated sleep room and an outdoor area. The service is one of five services operated by the registered provider nationally.

Staffing

The early years service employs 14 adults, including the registered provider, who is not based at the setting. Each of the remaining 13 adults are involved in the direct care of the children. This includes the manager and person in charge, who are both available to assist in the care rooms. Staff working directly with children in the service held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care & Education at level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9: Management and Recruitment, Regulation 10: Policies, Procedures of a Preschool Service, Regulation 11: Staffing Levels, Regulation 16: Records of a Preschool Service, Regulation 19: Health, Welfare and Development of a Preschool Child, Regulation 23: Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and Regulation 32: Complaints, however on inspection additional non-compliances which posed a risk were identified under Regulation 24: Checking In and Out of a Preschool Child, Regulation 25: First Aid and Regulation 29: Premises. 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 registered provider, 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*
- (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.*

(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.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*

(c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection.
- (b) The person in charge or a named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
- (c) There was a clear structure in the service that identified the management structure. Each room had a room leader and childcare worker.
- (2) Of the 14 adults attached to the service, only three adults were subject to inspection, as the other employment records were reviewed at the previous inspection which took place 21 October 2024. The following information was obtained:
- (a) Five of the required written and validated references were from past employers.
- (b) One written and validated reference was from a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 14 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) One police vetting declaration was required and was available and translated.
- (3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out for the three adults subject to inspection prior to being employed in the service.
- (4) The 14 adults had relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above or a qualification deemed as relevant by the minister.
- (7) The service had an induction process for new staff which included staff being given a set of policies and procedures for the service. Staff signed that they had received and read the policies and procedures. Monthly staff meetings were recorded, and evidence was reviewed by the inspectors of a staff meeting carried out on 22 May 2025.

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

The following policies were reviewed:

- Risk Management policy
- Infection control policy
- Complaints policy

These policies contained the relevant information to guide staff in their care practices for children.

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 adequate staff to care for the children in attendance in the service during the inspection.

(2) The adult to child ratios were observed to meet the minimum requirements in the care rooms for the duration of the inspection.

Room name:	Age range of children:	Number of children present:	Number of adults present:
Snowdrop room	1 to 2 years	5	1
Mayflower room	2 to 3 years	12	2
Violet Room	3 to 4 years	15	3
Blossom room (ASD room)	3 to 5 years	5	3

Afternoon:

Room name:	Age range of children:	Number of children present:	Number of adults present:
Snowdrop room	1 to 3 years	10	2
Mayflower room	2 to 3 years	8	2
Violet room	3 to 4 years	13	2
Lavendar room (ASD room)	3 to 5 years	1	1

(8) The staff roster was reviewed and clearly indicated that two staff were on the premises at all times while the service was in operation.

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;

Compliance Information

(1)(i) A staff roster was issued to the inspectors on arrival and the roster was accurate to the staffing recorded within each of the care rooms. The roster demonstrated start time, finish time, and break times. Staff were aware of their correct working hours.

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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) Basic needs:

- Children had unrestricted access to toilets, situated adjacent to the care rooms, equipped with warm water, liquid soap, and paper hand towels for handwashing.
- Meals on the day of inspection were served at appropriate times. Assistance was given to children that required same and children were encouraged to be self-sufficient where possible. Staff were observed to be on hand to support the children with their meals and to feed them as required. Cutlery and crockery were provided as appropriate for mealtimes. No child was in a chair for longer than their meal/ snack.
- The children had opportunities for outdoor play during their time in the service.

- Individual water bottles were freely available to the children throughout the day, and they were stored on a child height shelf.
- Sleep was facilitated throughout the day in the snowdrop room with each child's sleep needs met when they indicated the need for same. and at scheduled time in the mayflower room. Sleep was also facilitated at a scheduled time in the mayflower room.

Supporting Relationships:

- Each staff member was assigned to a care room. The children knew and were accustomed to the staff and staff were observed to spend time comforting the children as needed.
- The staff were observed communicating with the parents and guardians on collection and through the electronic application. Pictures were shared of the activities in the service through the electronic application. Staff also outlined that parents and guardians are invited to the graduation that was taking place at the end of the school term.

Physical and Material Environment

- Each of the care rooms had a variety of toys and resources, specific to the ages and development of the children attending each room. Motor development was supported by use of wheeled toys in the Snowdrop room and fine motor development was facilitated by use of paint brushes in the Violet room.
- The shelving in all care rooms was accessible and the children were able to choose their activities as required.
- There were rest areas available in the rooms, with soft seating, and soft furnishings, allowing children to sit and relax away from the larger group if needed.
- The layout of the care rooms supported the children to move freely within their environments and to actively engage in their chosen activity, inclusive of tabletop activities, dress-up, story time and art activities.

- (2) On the day of inspection, the inspectors observed no practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful in respect the children attending the service.

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 external door to the premises was appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the premises unsupervised and any unauthorised access to the service. An electromagnetic lock was placed on the main gate to the service.
- The outdoor area was secured with fencing and a gate to protect the children within.
- There were no cables accessible to children, during the inspection.
- On inspection, cleaning agents were stored in a manner that was inaccessible to children.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured to the windows throughout the service, on inspection.
- Visibility markings were provided on glass panel doors at child height, which reduced the risk of a child sustaining a collision injury.
- The dedicated office room was inaccessible to children.
- No hot drinks were observed to be consumed by the staff near the children.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands after nappy changing. The children were assisted with hand washing by the staff when required and reminded when necessary.
- The nappy changing mats were intact. A supply of disposable aprons and gloves were available at the nappy changing station. Nappies were disposed of in pedal operated non- contact bins and no odour was evident in the nappy changing room, during the inspection.
- All coats and bags were stored off the ground on wall hooks, minimising contact and cross infection.
- Wash hand basins were supplied with running water, liquid soap and paper towels. Handwashing was observed after use of the toilet facility.
- Tables were cleaned with suitable disinfectant after play and before snack time.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Suitable sleep equipment such as cots, stackable beds and mattresses were observed to be in use during sleep times.
- The children in the Mayflower room were observed to be supervised by the adults at all times while the children were sleeping on the stackable beds and mattresses.
- Sleep checks were carried out by the adults supervising the children during sleep time and adults were observed recording these checks on the electronic application.
- The mattresses were covered with appropriately fitted, waterproof protector sheets in the designated sleep room.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits in the service were observed to be clear and unobstructed, during the inspection.

Safeguarding:

- The service displayed their Child Safeguarding Statement in the hall, a prominent and public place.
- A record system for documenting and tracking child safeguarding and welfare concerns was available. On the day of inspection there were no concerns documented in this log. Staff were aware of the procedures to carry out in the event of a welfare concern arising.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The water temperature in the Blossom room was recorded at 46.1°C in the hand basin in the children's sanitary area. It is acknowledged when the inspector informed a staff member in the care room, the water heater temperature was reduced. This posed a risk of scalding during handwashing to the children in the care room.

Infection Control:

2. The nappy changing unit in the sanitary facility adjacent to the Snowdrops room was not observed to be cleaned between uses. This poses a risk of cross contamination and cross infection between the children.
3. The lidded bin in the sanitary area adjacent to the Violet room was observed to be overflowing, with used paper towels on the floor. This increased the risk of cross infection at the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1.

Corrective Action

The registered provider stated in the response that following the identification of elevated water temperature (46.1°C) in the Blossom Room hand basin, the water heater was promptly adjusted to bring the temperature within the recommended safe range for children's handwashing. The adjusted temperature was confirmed using a calibrated thermometer. While the increase may have been due to a fluctuation in the system, water temperatures throughout the facility have consistently been maintained within safe limits. This incident appears to be isolated. The service remains fully committed to always maintaining safe and appropriate water temperatures to ensure the wellbeing of both children and staff.

Preventive Action

A daily water temperature checklist has been put in place across all children's sanitary areas. Staff have been reminded to record temperatures daily and immediately report any irregularities. In addition, the maintenance team will carry out periodic reviews of the water heating system to identify any underlying causes of temperature fluctuations.

Infection Control:

2. Corrective Action

The registered provider stated in their response that the nappy changing unit was immediately cleaned and disinfected. All staff were reminded of the importance of cleaning the changing unit after each use to prevent cross infection. The staff attended a refresher training session on the nappy changing protocol.

Preventive Action

Ongoing refresher training will be conducted to reinforce good practice in good hygiene practices. All required hygiene and infection control measures, including clear signage at nappy changing stations, daily supervisory checks, staff training, and formal induction procedures, are already in place within the setting. These practices will continue to be implemented consistently and monitored closely by the person in charge to ensure that the cleaning and disinfection of nappy changing units occurs after every use.

3. Corrective Action

The registered provider stated in their response, that the bin was emptied immediately, and the surrounding area was cleaned and disinfected as part of our normal daily hygiene standards. It is important to note that maintaining a high standard of hygiene is part of our established daily routine. On the day of inspection, the housekeeper was absent.

Preventive Action

Regular bin checks and waste disposal will take place. Room supervisors will continue to monitor hygiene practices throughout the day.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documented and photographic evidence was submitted to the inspectorate.

Infection Control:

2. Documented and photographic evidence was submitted to the inspectorate.

3. Documented and photographic evidence was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response and documented evidence was reviewed by the inspectorate and has met the regulatory requirements. This will be reviewed on next inspection.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) In the Mayflower room, the inspector observed 12 preschool children present. A written record of the number of children that were checked in to the care room on the day of inspection was reviewed by the inspector and was found to have 11 children checked in. On discussion with the person in charge, it was outlined to the inspector that 12 children were checked in on the electronic application used by the service. The person in charge stated that the written record was used for fire drills and in the event of an emergency occurring in the service. This posed a safety risk to the children. Not checking children in to the service correctly may hinder the care and safety of the children in the event of an emergency occurring. It is acknowledged when brought to the attention of the person in charge the remaining child was checked in on the written record.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action

The registered provider stated that the service uses an online clocking in system to record children's attendance. The electronic system is the official method used for attendance and is relied upon during fire drill and emergencies. We will continue to use the online attendance system as our primary and official record for daily attendance and emergency situations. Ongoing monitoring and routine checks by management are in place to ensure that the system remains accurate, supporting our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety and care.

Preventive Action

To ensure ongoing accuracy and reliability of the online clocking-in system, staff will continue to be trained and reminded to clock in each child immediately upon arrival. Regular audits of the attendance records will be conducted by management to verify that the system reflects the actual number of children present. Also, staff will perform cross-checks during key transition times (such as before outdoor activities or fire drills) to confirm attendance accuracy in real time. Any discrepancies identified will be addressed promptly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence was submitted to the inspectorate for review.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response was reviewed by the inspectorate and has met the regulatory requirements. This will be reviewed on next 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, no staff member held an in-date certificate in First Aid Responder (FAR) training. It is acknowledged that five staff held an in date basic paediatric first aid certificate. This posed a risk to the children in the service in the event of a child requiring emergency medical treatment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action

The registered provider stated in their response that three staff members had already commenced their FAR training prior to the expiration of their previous certificates. Unfortunately, the completion of the practical component was delayed due to an unexpected electrical outage at the training centre on the scheduled day of assessment. This unforeseen event caused a delay in issuing the new FAR certificates, resulting in a temporary gap between the expiration of the previous certifications and the completion of the updated training. However, in the interim, the five staff members holding valid Basic Paediatric First Aid certificates were designated to respond to any medical emergencies, ensuring that qualified personnel were always available. Since the inspection, the three staff members have successfully completed their FAR training, and their updated certificates are now in place.

Preventive Action

All necessary systems for tracking and maintaining up to date first aid training are firmly established in the service. We will continue to rigorously maintain these practices to ensure that all staff always hold current first aid certifications, reinforcing our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of every child in our care.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documented evidence of First Aid Responder training certificates was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response and documented evidence was reviewed and has met the regulatory requirements.

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

Non-Compliance Information

(d)
The inspectors noted unclean areas, toys and equipment in the Blossom, Mayflower and Snowdrop care rooms, sanitary and outdoor area. The inspectors observed areas that required maintenance such overgrown thorny bushes protruding the boundary fence in the outdoor area. This was at variance with the cleaning and risk assessment records that were reviewed by the inspector which were completed daily by the staff on the electronic application. This posed the risk of safety and cross infection to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action

The registered provider stated in their response that all affected areas were addressed. A full deep clean was carried out in the areas identified. Particular attention was given to high touch points and shared resources to minimise the risk of cross contamination. The outdoor area was attended to with the overgrown thorny bushes along the boundary fence trimmed back and the surrounding area cleared.

Preventive Action

The service has procedures in place for daily cleaning, risk assessments and ongoing maintenance. In addition, regular checks will take place to ensure that all areas meet expected standards and that any issues are identified and addressed. Maintenance of the outdoor environment, including risk assessments will continue and be monitored closely.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted to the inspectorate for review.

Summary Comment

The registered providers response was reviewed by the inspectorate and has met the regulatory requirements. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (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

- (1) The service's complaints policy outlined:
- (a) The procedure to be followed by a person making a complaint in relation to the service.
 - (b) The manner in which a complaint shall be dealt with.
 - (c) The procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2)(a)(b) The service kept and maintained digital records of information in respect of (a) and (b). The manager stated no complaints were made in respect of the preschool service since the last inspection 21st October 2024.
- (3)(a)(b) The service kept and maintained digital records that were open to inspection in accordance with (a) and (b).