

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2018FL508
--------------------------	-------------

<b>Name of Service:</b>	Really Cool Afterschool & Montessori School
-------------------------	---

<b>Address of Service:</b>	1 Linen Court, Georges Hill, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
----------------------------	---

<b>Eircode:</b>	K32 A254
-----------------	----------

<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Malgorzata Orłowska Smith, Marzena Stronska
-------------------------------------	---

<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day
----------------------	----------

<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	04/06/2025
-------------------------------	------------

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	37	PM	24
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.
---------------------------------	-----------------

### Description of service

Really Cool Afterschool & Montessori School has been operating as a privately-owned childcare service since September 2018, accommodating pre-school children aged 1-6 years on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis. In addition, school aged childcare services are provided to children up to 12 years of age. This service is one of three early years services owned by the registered providers, all of which are located in Balbriggan in north Co. Dublin. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 50 preschool children and operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm each weekday, participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12midday for 38 weeks each year. There are 4 care rooms in the service namely the Bunnies room, Squirrels room, Owls room and Foxes room. There is an outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

There are 19 staff members employed in the service. Seventeen staff work directly with the pre-school children attending the service, one of whom was a relief staff member, two staff members work with school aged children only and a staff member is employed as a relief staff member for school aged care in addition to participating in cleaning duties. Two staff members posts are part funded through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) scheme to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs during the ECCE sessions. A staff member from one of the companies' other services was present and working directly with the children on the afternoon of inspection. One of the two registered providers arrived in the service following the commencement of the inspection and remained in the service for the duration of the day.

### 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 regulations 9, 11,16,19,23,25 and 26; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 and 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

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 II - Registration and Register

### Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.*

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider failed to notify the Early Years Inspectorate of a change in circumstances in relation to the following as per the schedule 4 Form for Notification of Change in Circumstances:

The person in charge were at variance with the information listed on the national register.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

They are currently working with TUSLA to rectify this discrepancy. They decide that the person listed as the person in charge will go back to their service. In case of her absence there will be nominated and rostered deputy to cover her duties.

#### Preventive Action

Emphasis is being put on performing regular checks of their circumstances and that they are fully registered.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Email sent to TUSLA (SOORS) on 24/06/25 and 8/07/25.

### Summary Comment

The service has engaged with the Early year's inspectorate and the noncompliance identified under regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances has been addressed. The regulatory requirement has been met.

### 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The service supervisor was the designated person in charge on the day of the inspection and was present when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the day of inspection and remained present on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

Twenty staff files were reviewed including the file for one of the registered providers. Seven staff members have commenced in the service since the last inspection of the service on the 02/09/2024, of which 5 staff members work directly with the preschool children only. Garda vetting disclosures for the remaining 13 staff members were reviewed.

(2)(a) Nine written and validated references were available for the 7 adults whose files were reviewed.

(b) Five written and validated references available for the 7 adults whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 7 staff members whose full files were reviewed and the 13 staff members whose Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed only. However, the service did not 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) International police vetting was available as required for 4 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The service supervisor and 12 core staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. Two staff members employed to work with school aged children only did not require a childcare qualification.

### Non-Compliance Information

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 1 staff member whose file was reviewed and who works directly with the children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

(4) Staff member was employed to undergo training before taking on the role of childcare worker. Despite having completed their education, the institution had not yet issued their full diploma. The worker has been awarded their full diploma stating they have achieved QQI Level 6 in childcare.

#### Preventive Action

(4) Staff will not be hired until they have been awarded their full diplomas as is stated in the employment policy. The date of when the contract will be signed will be pushed back until all relevant qualifications are presented.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Certificate of the staff member was provided.

### Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been reviewed and accepted.

### 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) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity during the inspection:

- In the Bunnies room there were 6 children aged between 1 year 4 months and 2 years 5 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Squirrels room there were 6 children aged between 2 years 5 months and 3 years 2 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Owls room there were 13 children aged between 3 years 7 month and 5 years 5 months being cared for by 3 staff members. A staff member in this room was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the Foxes room there were 12 children aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 1 month being cared for by 2 staff members. A staff member in this room was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio to support children with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

The relief staff member and supervisor were available to cover staff breaks and support with the care of the children in the care rooms when required.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at the service

### 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:

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

#### Compliance Information

(1) (k) The service had a record in writing of the details of accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children. Eleven records were sampled and found to be clear and legible and included parental signatures to confirm that had been informed and were aware of the incident involving their child on the day of occurrence.

### 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) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

#### Basic needs:

- The service provides breakfast, dinner which is supplied from an external catering company and reheated in the service and tea to the children with all children bringing their own morning snack with them to the service. Mealtimes were observed to be relaxed and sociable, the staff members sat with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat and provided assistance as required. In the

Bunnies room the children sat at a low-level table and the staff members were observed to chat to the children whilst encouraging them to eat.

- Children who required nappy changing had their nappies changed on a regular schedule and more frequently as required. Older children accessed the toilet independently with support and guidance provided as needed. The personal care needs of the children were attended to promptly as evidenced by children's faces being cleaned after eating.
- The children in the Bunnies room were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest after they had their dinner in individual cots that were set up in the care room. The children aged over 2 years who required sleep were facilitated to do so on sleep mats in the Squirrels room.
- All of the children attending the service enjoyed time in the outdoor play area on the day of inspection.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- The parents and children in the individual care rooms were observed to be greeted warmly on arrival to the service. The staff members were observed to take the opportunity to provide verbal feedback to the parents when they collected their children.
- The service used a software technology application (an App) to provide information to parents in relation to updates on eating, nappy changes, activities and sleep on a daily basis.
- Throughout the service staff members were observed to support each other in the care of the children and regularly updated each other in relation to the care of the children particularly around staff break times, which ensured a smooth transition of care for the children.

### Physical and material environment:

- The tables and chairs provided in the care rooms were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children attending in each care room.
- Materials that were available in the care rooms were positioned on low level shelving which were easily accessible to the children.
- Interest areas including well-resourced home areas, construction resources, transport toys, small world and arts and crafts materials provided in the Owls and Foxes room supported the children's play.
- An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service. The children throughout the care rooms in the service were facilitated to spend time in the outdoor play area on the day of inspection. A climbing frame, a playhouse and ride on toys were provided for the children to play with.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Physical and material environment:

1. There was a lack of natural, sensory and open-ended materials in the Bunnies room or the Squirrels room in order to facilitate sensorial play experiences or encourage the children's creativity and imagination. For example, sensory type materials such as sand, rice or pasta trays were not available to the children in these care rooms. Furthermore, there were no sensory opportunities provided in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.
2. There were no play resources available to support the children to use the play kitchen in the outdoor play area.
3. Family walls were either not available in the care rooms or where they were available for example in the Owls room were poorly resourced, this does not support the children in bridging the connection between the service and home.
4. There were limited resources in the Cosy area in the Squirrels room to provide a comfortable area for children to freely access throughout the day as required for children's rest and relaxation.
5. The children in the Foxes room were observed eating dinner consisting of pasta from small plastic bowls and plastic spoons. The cutlery used at mealtimes were not suitable for the children's ages and stage of development.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

#### Physical and material environment:

1. The Squirrels and Bunnies rooms have been provided with more sensory, natural and open-end play materials. They have set up pasta and rice trays, boxes with balls of yarn, fabrics, pinecones etc. They have also included wooden blocks, playdough, sensory bottles and construction toys (magnets) for the children to play with. The outdoor area has been fitted with a wood chip, water, dishes to allow imaginary play in the kitchen. they took out construction toys, cymbals, chalk boards, and a water basin to remind the staff the important value of sensory play and to use it regularly.
2. The outdoor kitchen has been provided with wood chips, water and kitchen utensils to support child use.
3. The family wall in the Squirrels and Bunnies rooms have been set up. The family walls in the Foxes and Owls rooms are currently poorly equipped as many of the children have left for the summer or have recently graduated. The walls will be updated with the beginning of the school year.
4. Mirrors, infinity mirror, bookshelves, pillows, blankets and mats have been placed in the Cosy area.

5. They have purchased more forks for the children.

### **Preventive Action**

#### **Physical and material environment:**

1. Staff reminded of the importance of including materials that are natural, sensory and open-ended for the children to play with. They will perform regular checks.
2. Regular checks to be carried out ensuring the kitchen is well equipped at all times.
3. Regular checks will be performed, and the walls will be updated when needed.
4. Staff has been reminded of the importance that the children need adequate resources for rest and relaxation. They will be performing checks on the Cosy area.
5. Kitchen staff reminded to provide the children with age-appropriate cutlery during meals.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographic evidence of additional learning and play resources were provided.

### **Summary Comment**

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed. The regulatory requirement for regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been addressed.

## 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 doors and gates were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. A code is required to enter the external gated entrance which is only available to staff and parents of the service. The main door is secured by an electromagnetic lock.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.
- The services designated emergency exits were unobstructed.

##### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene throughout the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- The services nappy changing policy was observed to be implemented when staff members changed children's nappies.
- There was a lined, lidded, and pedal-operated bin in the sanitary accommodation where nappy changing took place.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- Soothers were stored in personalised containers when not in use.
- The perishable items in the children's lunches were stored under refrigerated conditions throughout the care rooms.

##### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

##### Safe Sleep:

- The children aged less than 2 years had access to a standard cot to sleep in.

- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern were being performed and documented on all sleeping children.

### Fire Safety:

- The records reviewed demonstrated that fire drills were practiced on a regular basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

- A Garda vetting disclosure that was available for 1 staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

#### General Safety:

- Renewal of Garda Vetting was performed on the 26/06/2025 for relevant staff.

#### Preventive Action

#### General Safety

- Regular checks will be performed.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Garda vetting disclosure.

### Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed. The regulatory requirement for regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been addressed.

### 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times. Five members of staff held in date FAR training certificates.
- (2)(a) &(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises, and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

### 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 was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place on 29/04/2025.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire extinguishers in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on the 03/09/34.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

### Non-Compliance Information

(b) A record was not kept of the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

(1)(b) Certificate is now displayed on the wall.

#### Preventive Action

(1)(b) Regular checks.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of smoke alarm certificate was provided.

### Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 26 - Fire safety measures has been adequately addressed.

## Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

### Regulation 29 - Premises

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

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

### Compliance Information

(b)The building was observed to be safe and secure. Access to the building was via an intercom system at a secure door on the ground floor. This reduced the risk of an unauthorised adult entering the premises or a child leaving the premises unsupervised.

### Non-Compliance Information

(d) The service was not maintained in a proper state of repair as demonstrated by the following:

- The paint on the wall beside the door to the outdoor area in the Squirrels Room was peeling with plaster exposed underneath.
- The paint in the cosy area in the Squirrels Room was peeling with plaster exposed underneath.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective Action

(d) Walls have been painted and repaired.

### Preventive Action

(d) They will perform regular checks for facility conditions.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of painted walls submitted.

## Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 29 - Premises has been reviewed and accepted and the non-compliance has been adequately addressed.