

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2024FL002		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Cocoon Childcare		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	9 Cronan's Well Park, Mooretown, Swords, Co. Dublin		
<b>Eircode:</b>	K67 K2K8		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Nikki Battams		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	15/10/2024		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	38	PM 38
<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 & S Cully		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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

Cocoon Childcare Swords is one of fifteen early years' services operated by the registered provider across Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare. Cocoon Childcare Swords has been in operation since April 2024 in a purpose built 2 storey premises in Moorestown on the outskirts of Swords, north Dublin. There are 5 care rooms in the service, the Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 were located on the ground floor of the service and the Toddler room and Preschool room were located on the first floor. A vacant care room on the first floor was in use as a sleep room for the children attending the Wobbler room 2 and the Toddler room. The service provides full day, part-time and sessional preschool care & education to children between the ages of 0– 6 years' operating from 07:30am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 38 weeks of the year.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs a manager to oversee the day-to-day operational management of the service supported by a staff team of 14 including a chef who prepares and cooks all of the children's meals in the onsite kitchen. On the day of inspection, the registered provider and the company's operational manager were present in the service.

### Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was announced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11 and 19; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23.

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 registered provider, operations manager, 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) The service manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived announced to the service.

The files for 15 staff members including the service manager were reviewed. The files for both the registered provider and operations manager were reviewed at the fit for purpose inspection of the service in April 2024 and were found to meet the regulatory requirement and therefore were not reviewed at this inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Two validated written references were available for the service manager and 14 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 15 staff members whose files were reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for 7 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 14 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service including the service manager and the area manager 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.

### 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 was 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 announced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Wobbler room 1 there were 6 children aged 10 months to 14 months attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members. One child was present in the afternoon as part of their settling in process.
- In the Wobbler room 2 there were 9 children aged between 1 year 4 months and 1 year 6 months, all attending on a full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Toddler room there were 10 children aged between 1 years 6 month to 2 years 9 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Preschool room there were 13 children aged 2 year 7 months to 3 years 11 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

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

### 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 daily life of the service:

#### Basic needs:

- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service and healthy meals and snacks were provided for the children by the onsite chef at regular intervals throughout the day. Mealtimes were observed to be a pleasant unhurried experience with children given plenty of time to enjoy their meals. Staff members were observed sitting with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat. The staff members in the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2 and Toddler room sat in front of the children who required assistance with eating warmly engaging with the children at their eye level. Throughout the care rooms the children's water bottles were accessible to them on low level shelving for them to take as desired throughout the day.

- Nappy changing was carried out at scheduled times and more frequently as needed, staff members used the opportunity to chat and sing to the children during the procedure. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently with discreet support and supervision provided as required. The children were gently reminded to wash their hands afterwards. Children's personal care needs were attended to promptly with protective bibs were placed on younger children prior to eating and their hands and faces were cleaned afterwards.
- The staff in the Wobbler room 1 facilitated child-led sleeping practices in line with the children's home routine with children placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if their sleep time coincided with mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke up. All of the children attending the Wobbler room 2 were placed to sleep after their dinner at 11:30am in the first-floor sleep room. Children attending the Toddler room who required sleep also slept in the first-floor sleep room after dinner. There were standard cots and stackable floor beds available to the children.
- The staff members were observed to respond promptly to the children's requests using regular praise and encouragement to support the children in addition to calmly distracting or re-directing the children and using problem solving techniques to good effect thereby preventing any minor behaviour issues from escalating.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- There was a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the service, parents and children were observed being greeted warmly on arrival and staff members took the opportunity to provide feedback to parents and guardians on the children's day in the service when children were collected. Throughout all the care rooms a daily record of the children's feeding, nappy changes, activities, general wellbeing and sleep was maintained for the children and shared with the parents when the children were collected from the service.
- The staff in the service were observed speaking to children in gentle tones, getting down to the child's level to interact and providing nurturing care and interactions. The children were very familiar with their caregivers and within their environment and sought out staff for comfort and support as they required it. The staff members in both Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 were observed to spend extended periods of time on the floor engaging with the children at their level. One child was present in the Wobbler room 1 was settling into the service on the day of inspection. The staff members were observed using gentle and reassuring tones of voice, gently encouraging the child to explore the environment, and holding and soothing the child when they needed comforting.

- Throughout the care rooms the staff members were observed to work well together as a team, the staff members supported each other in the care of the children, modelling positive ways of interacting with the children and one another.

### Physical and material environment

- Throughout the care rooms suitable low-level tables and chairs were provided for the children, and these were used for table-top activities and mealtimes. Low level nursery chairs were available in the Wobbler room 1 for children who were not yet developmentally ready to sit unsupported in a standard chair during mealtimes. A full-sized armchair was provided in the Wobbler room 1 to allow the staff members to sit, hold, nurture and bottle-feed the children when required during the day.
- The learning environments within each of the 4 care rooms in the service were appropriate to the age and stage of the children attending the individual rooms. Defined interest areas included well-resourced home areas with accessorial equipment such as pots, pans, crockery and play food which enabled the children to extend their imaginary along with dress up materials, art and crafts materials, musical instruments, construction toys, a wide range of tabletop materials and books which supported all areas of development. Sensory play was facilitated through the provision of sand in the care rooms.
- Wobbler room 1 contained equipment to provide opportunities for the youngest children in the service to engage in physical activity through self-initiated movement with push-along toys provided to support gross motor development. The play resources including a range of sensorial toys and shape sorters were provided in wicker baskets at the children's level. A large wall-mounted mirror supported the development of the children's visual senses.
- Family Photographs were positioned at the children's level throughout the care rooms along with family books which supported the children to bridge the gap between the service and home.
- The outdoor area to the rear of the service was fully enclosed and surfaced with artificial grass. The area provided the children with the opportunity for running and free movement. Two slides were available in addition to ride on and push along toys. A well-resourced mud kitchen was located adjacent to a water wall and a large sand tray enabled the children to enjoy sensory play. All of the children present in the service enjoyed time in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

*A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### Safe Sleep:

1. On the day of the inspection three children, one aged 1 year 4 months and two aged 1 year 6 months, were observed sleeping on stackable beds with sleep mats 4cm in depth set up in the vacant care room on the first floor of the service after dinner. This practice was at variance with the national best practice safe sleep guidelines which states that when a floor bed is used for a child aged less than 24 months it must be fitted with a firm and perfectly fitting mattress of at least 6cm in depth that is designed for the specific floor bed.

##### Fire Safety:

2. Eleven children aged less than 2 years were placed to sleep in a care room on the first floor of the service after dinner. Children aged less than 2 years are not permitted to sleep on the first floor due to the risks associated with fire evacuation in the event of an emergency.

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

##### Corrective Action

##### Safe Sleep:

1. The children occupying floor beds do so at the parent's request, as they have never slept in a cot at home. Manager's preference is to use the stackable beds with the tailored mattresses that was purchased from the bed supplier as the child is visible to staff from all angles. However, in keeping with the guidelines issued, they have ordered the recommended enclosed floor beds.

##### Fire Safety:

2. The children under 2 are now sleeping on the ground floor.

##### Preventive Action

##### Safe Sleep:

1. Recommended floor beds have been purchased and will be used for any child under 2, that cannot sleep in a cot for various reasons.

##### Fire Safety:

2. This management team are aware to consider the sleep guidance, when planning centre occupancy.

## Supporting documentation submitted

Invoice for the purchase of floor beds provided.

## Summary Comment

The inspectors reviewed the corrective actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider after the inspection. The registered provider demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.