

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025CC009
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Name of Service:	Cocoon Childcare
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Address of Service:	Heathfield, Ballincollig, Co Cork
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Eircode:	Not yet issued
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nikki Battams
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	27/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	44	PM	43
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Office, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurrabraher, Cork. T23X40
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter, D Prendergast
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
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Description of service

Cocoon Childcare Ballincollig first registered and began operating in 2025 and provides a full day care service for children aged 0 to 6 years. The service operates from a purpose-built single storey premises, situated in a residential area of Ballincollig in Co Cork. There are eight care rooms, each with adjoining sanitary facilities. Two sleep rooms are available, along with a kitchen, an office, a staff room, a laundry room, a sluice room, staff sanitary facilities and a storeroom. There is a large enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the property.

Staffing

There are currently 20 adults attached to the early years service. This includes the registered provider, operations support manager and a relief manager, who are not based at the setting but were present on the day of the inspection and provided support in the care rooms. A chef and a cleaner, who work at the setting, are not involved in the direct care of the children.

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/ 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 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*

(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) A designated person in charge of the service and a deputy were onsite and named on the roster.
- (b) The registered provider was on site for the duration of the inspection process. Review of the staff roster demonstrated that a person in charge was consistently available, while the service was in operation.
- (2) Recruitment records in respect of the 20 staff attached to the early years service were reviewed.
- (a) Thirty-five of the 40 required written and validated references had been provided by past employers.
- (b) Five of the 40 references on file were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 20 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was required and available for 14 of the staff members, who had lived outside the State as adults.
- (4) There was evidence that 14 staff working directly with the children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent. Four staff who did not have the required qualification had letters of eligibility to practice/letters of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6*

opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider has ensured that there is at all times an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

(2) On the day of inspection, the adult to child ratio was in adherence to the requirement. The ratio was maintained for the entirety of the inspection.

- On the day of inspection there were two staff working directly with nine children aged 2.8 to 4.5 years in Preschool 1.
- There were two adults working directly with five children aged 1-2 years in Wobbler 1.
- There were two adults working directly with eight children aged 1-2 years in Wobbler 2.
- There were two adults working directly with nine children aged 1-2 years in Wobbler 3.
- There were two adults working directly with eight children aged 2-3 years in Toddler 1.
- There were two adults working directly with five children aged 2-3 years in Junior Preschool.

(8) (a) There were always at least two adults on the premises during the hours of operation. This was evidenced through inspection of the staff roster.

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:

- Children's toileting needs were responded to promptly and respectfully.

- There was a water station available in each room so that children always had access to water throughout the day.
- The meal plan for the service was displayed and the menu offered healthy nutritious food. During the inspection, children were served mixed fruit and yoghurt in the morning. The hot dinner was mashed potatoes with vegetables and breaded chicken.
- Staff sat with children at mealtimes; children were encouraged to self feed but aided to do so if necessary.
- Food served to children was developmentally appropriate. The texture of the food for the younger children was of a smoother consistency than that served to the older children.
- Food was served at regular intervals throughout the day to ensure children were not hungry.
- Staff reported that food was available outside of mealtimes, if required.
- Sleep cues from children were responded to in a timely manner. Children were placed to sleep in suitable and appropriate sleeping equipment.
- Staff were observed to be kind, respectful and patient in their care of the children.

Physical and Material Environment:

- Each care room what is laid out in such a way to allow free movement around the room. Wobbler 1 and Wobbler 2 rooms were laid out with low level furniture to allow children to cruise around the room.
- Each room contained play equipment and resources which were age and stage appropriate.
- All of the play equipment and resources were stored at children's height to allow ease of access and free choice of play materials.
- The outdoor area consisted of a wide-open space where children were free to engage in gross motor play.
- There was a smaller, similar area for use by the younger children which was separated by a fence.
- Equipment in the outdoor area included bikes, trikes, footballs, a play kitchen and large blocks for construction.
- On the day of inspection, children from each room had time to play outdoors. Each room was equipped with weather appropriate clothing for the children's use.
- The sleep rooms were laid out is such a way to allow easy supervision of children. Soft music was playing while the children were preparing to sleep.
- The corridors of the service were ornamented with points of interest in the recessed windows. Through discussion with staff, it was noted that these interest areas were designed as a tool for children and staff to interact and chat with each other.

Supporting Relationships:

- A key worker system was used in the service.
- Staff were observed to be kind and responsive to the children in their care. For example, while changing a child's nappy the inspector observed the staff member to sing and speak in quiet tones to the child.
- A strong ethos of teamwork was evident in the setting. Staff appeared to engage with it with each other in a kind and professional manner.
- The service operates an open-door policy. Through discussion with the registered provider, it was noted that parents are encouraged to enter the care rooms at drop off, collection and during settling in periods. The inspector observed parents arriving at different times and they were greeted in a welcoming manner.
- Staff report that communication with parents is done daily during handover and collection times. There is also a newsletter which families receive.
- A family wall was observed in each of the care rooms. Photographs of each children's family adds a sense of belonging and community to the service.
- Some of the children in the younger age groups were still settling into the service. Staff were observed to show kindness and empathy while soothing these children.
- The inspector observed staff asking children's permission to change their nappy and clean their noses. This fosters a sense of respect and ensures children's voices are heard.

Programme of Activities:

- The service operates from a play-based pedagogy.
- The curriculum statement of the service is displayed in each care room. This statement states that the service follows an emergent curriculum that encourages flexible learning. It was noted that short term curriculum plans are available and displayed on each care room door. This further supported the children's learning by following their lead and providing learning opportunities based on their interests.
- It was observed that children are provided with opportunities for sensory play, gross motor activity, fine motor play, imaginative play and social play throughout the day.
- It was observed that the programme of activities in each room was a mixture of adult led activities and child led play.
- Children were encouraged to partake in activities but were equally allowed to opt out and choose their own play materials.
- There were opportunities observed where children partook in solo play, group play activities and where children chose their own play partners.

- Staff were observed to partake in the children's play in a fun and meaningful way.

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 main entrance was fitted with a keypad and electronic lock to prevent unauthorised access.
- All low-level windows were fitted with visibility strips.
- Windows were fitted with restrictors to prevent children from exiting or falling.
- All blind cords were secured throughout the service.
- The door to each care room was fitted with an extra half door which was kept on a sliding bolt out of reach of children.
- All cleaning materials were stored out of reach of children.
- All pull cords in sanitary accommodations were safely secured.
- Low level feeding chairs were in use for the younger children. These were fitted with safety harnesses.

Infection Control:

- Each care room had their own sanitary accommodation which was fitted with toilets, sinks and a nappy changing unit.
- Each sanitary accommodation was fitted with disposable aprons and gloves. Each had pedal bins, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Each sink was thermostatically controlled to ensure water was below 43°C. Throughout the service, the sinks ranged from 26.6°C to 40.4°C.
- Staff and children were observed to wash hands regularly throughout the day.
- Staff were observed adhering to the services policy on nappy changing.
- Wipes, nappies and barrier creams were individually labelled and not for communal use. They were stored in individually labelled baskets.
- Bed linen was not shared between the children. Each child had their own individual bed linen which was laundered on site.
- Detailed, completed cleaning templates and water temperature checks were available for review by the inspector.

- All perishable foods were stored in a refrigerator in the kitchen.

Administration of Medication:

- Each room had a folder containing information on which children had allergies or medical plans. The folder also contained information on care plans where necessary.
- Staff informed the inspectors that no child is currently taking medication but were aware of the procedure on how to administer medication if necessary.

Safe Sleep:

- There were three designated sleep rooms in operation on the day of inspection.
- Staff were observed to stay in the sleep rooms with children on stackable beds.
- There were an adequate number of standard cots with correct fitting mattresses.
- There were stackable beds available for the children over the age of 2 years that required a sleep.
- Each of the mattresses was fitted with a waterproof mattress cover.
- It was observed that sleeping children had physical observations conducted by staff, recording position, colour and breathing of the child, every ten minutes.
- The air temperature of the sleep rooms registered between 16.8°C and 17.1°C.

Fire Safety:

- Firefighting equipment was wall mounted throughout the service.
- All fire exits were unobstructed.

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.

Compliance Information

1. The registered provider has ensured that there is a person trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) training at all times available to the children. Through the inspection of staff records, it was noted that there were five staff with this qualification. It was evident through examination of the staff roster that at least one of these adults was available at all times throughout the day.