

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL126
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Name of Service:	Shining Stars Montessori & Creche
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Address of Service:	Unit 33 and 34 Pinehill Industrial Estate, Mountain Top, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 R973
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aoife Dorrian
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	21/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	79	No.	55
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Killeen K. Folan
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).

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Description of service

Shining Stars Montessori and Creche is a privately owned and operated preschool service located in the urban area of Letterkenny. The service is registered to provide full day care to children aged 0-6 years and operates between the hours of 6.30am and 17.45pm. The service is located within an industrial estate and occupies a number of adjoining ground floor level units. There are seven care rooms and three outdoor play areas. There is sanitary accommodation for staff and children in various locations, and one sleep room is available off the Little Stars (baby) room.

Staffing

There were 33 staff members employed to work in the service. The register provider works in the service but was not in the service on the day of inspection. There was a student on placement on the day of inspection.

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 9,11,19,23,24,25 and 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 24 checking in and out and record of attendance.

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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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.*

(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) The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.**
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.**
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and specific roles of each employee.**

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that 12 new staff members had been employed since the

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previous inspection. On the day of inspection, one student was present on an educational work placement programme. A total of 13 files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for four staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review. On the day of inspection, nineteen adults were present, the person in charge, fifteen adults who were employed to work directly with the children, one adult in an administrative role, one chef and one adult who was a student on placement.

The following vetting information was available for 13 adults:

- (a) 21 written validated references from past employers for 9 of the adults.
- (b) 5 written validated references from reputable sources for 4 of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. 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) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4) Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent was on file for ten staff members and one staff member held a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

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

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. The following was observed on the morning of the inspection.

- Busy Stars Room: 2 staff supervising 14 children aged 3-5 years.
- Bright Start Room: 2 adults supervising 15 children ages 3-4 years.
- Realta Nua Room: 1 staff supervising 9 children between 3-5 years
- Super Stars Room: 1 staff supervising 16 children between 4-5 years.
- Little Stars Room: 2 staff supervising 5 children aged between 8 months- 1 years.
- Twinkle Star Room: 2 staff supervising 9 children aged 1 year.
- Shooting star Room: 3 staff supervising 11 children between 2-3 years.

On the afternoon the following was observed:

- Busy Stars Room- 2 staff supervising 11 children aged 3-5 years.
- Bright Start Room: 2 adults supervising 12 children ages 3-4 years.
- Realta Nua Room: Closed
- Super Stars Room: 1 staff and 1 student supervising 7 children between 4-5 years.
- Little Stars Room: 2 staff supervising 5 children aged between 8 months- 1 years.
- Twinkle Star Room: 2 staff supervising 9 children aged 1 year.
- Shooting star Room: 2 staff supervising 11 children between 2-3 years.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was always maintained throughout the inspection.

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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

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) (b)

Basic Needs:

- The person in charge described how they provide balanced meals and snacks each day. This was further evidenced by a review of the menu plan, a discussion with the chef and staff members and observation of dinner in the Toddler Room. This meal, a pasta bolognaises and potatoes, included the required food groups, was accompanied by jugs of water and served family style at the table.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and promptly in the care rooms when required and was handled in a positive and sensitive manner; staff members were observed speaking to children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction. Children appeared familiar with the routine.
- Bibs and aprons were available to the children for messy play activities. Spare clothes were available if the children required a change of clothing during the session.
- Children in the Baby and Wobbler room were observed to be free to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up, learn to walk in a safe space. There was easy access to the outside area throughout the day, and children moved freely between both indoors and outdoors.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment and materials.

Supporting Relationships:

- During meals the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere. Staff held and interacted positively with children during bottle feeding. The

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staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves.

- A key-worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for creating close relationships with a designated group of children and their parents. This promoted the development and sustainment of relationships between the children, their parents, and the staff in the service.
- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. Children were observed seeking out staff for reassurance and comfort. The staff members in the Baby room communicated positively with the babies using soft and gentle tones, offered reassurance by sitting near them on the floor as they explored and promptly comforted any child if they became upset.
- In the care rooms staff supported children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- A health-promoting ethos was implemented in the service in relation to supporting children's emotional well-being and emotional literacy. This was evidenced on the day of inspection, with staff members heard encouraging children to express how they were feeling at different times throughout the session. Age-appropriate books on feelings were available and used to help pre-school children recognise, become aware of, and manage their emotions. Additionally, emotion stations featuring pictures of sad, happy, angry, and worried facial expressions were effectively utilised to help children recognise and regulate their feelings.
- Staff and parents work in partnership within the service. The use of a child profile electronic application gave staff members valuable information about the child's likes, dislikes, daily routine, interests, and family. Inspectors reviewed a sample of the children's profiles which included exploring, thinking and learning to cut, sensory input making soup, individual pictures of the children completing activities of interest. The service used a software technology application (an App) to provide information to parents in relation to updates on eating, nappy changes, activities, sleep, and sleep checks. Communication with parents was also completed at drop off and collection and this was observed by the inspectors on the day of inspection.
- Many children demonstrated a sense of pride in their success during the session and were observed calling on the staff members to share their achievements. The staff members readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments, focusing on children's actions, interactions and play activities.

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Non-Compliance Information

1. On the day of inspection, the sleep routine in the Shooting Stars room was observed to be scheduled and not child led. Between 11:55 AM and 12:40 PM, children who did not require sleep, or who woke early from their nap, were observed to sit at tables doing art or drawing in a dimly lit room until it was time for the scheduled sleep time to be over. While it is acknowledged that staff engaged in activities with the children, the children during this time were not afforded the opportunity of choice to choose their own activities or have meaningful play or interactions, as they were reminded to use quiet voices while the other children were asleep.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The register provider submitted the following response. All staff been guided through our child led sleep policy- and we have ensured that the children that wake early or do not sleep during sleep time- are relocated to our sensory area/outdoor play area. Management will ensure oversight in all care rooms.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of children who do not requires sleep in alternative rooms and plans for activities for children who do not require sleep.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 has been adequately addressed.

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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 into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Highchairs within the baby room were fitted with a 5-point safety harness and were in good sate of repair.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins stored out of reach of children.
- Staff members were observed to complete head counts while transitioning in and out of the building.
- Children with allergies and intolerances were identified in the service and known to all staff, each room kept a list of the children and what they were allergic to.

Infection Control:

- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning schedules displayed and up to date in each care room.
- Children were observed to wash their hands regularly including before snacks and meals. Child friendly hand wash posters with picture instructions were placed above the wash basins.

Administration of Medication:

- The staff informed the inspector that none of the children needed to have medication administered to them while in the service. The staff showed awareness of the procedures to be followed in relation to storage and administration of medication to children should it be required.

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Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for two staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting.
2. The registered provider did not ensure that adequate steps were being taken to ensure that the safety of the children. On the day of the inspection, the water temperature in the sanitary area was initially recorded at 66°C, which significantly exceeds safe limits and poses a risk of scalding to children. However, a review of the service's daily temperature log confirmed that staff had checked and documented the water temperature earlier that morning, noting it within an acceptable range. A subsequent check by the inspector during the inspection confirmed that the water temperature had returned to and remained within acceptable levels.
3. A bait box was located in the press in the shooting stars room that was accessible to the preschool children.

Infection Control:

4. The blue paper towels were not appropriately stored in paper towel dispenser as required. Inadequate storage can lead to potential cross contamination.
5. In the Superstars room, an open-top bin was being used to throw away waste, which creates a risk of cross-contamination. A foot operated pedal bin is required.

Safe Sleep:

6. On the day of inspection, room temperatures were not being monitored during sleep times in both the Twinkle Stars and Shooting Stars rooms. Staff in these rooms were unable to ensure that optimal sleep temperatures were maintained for the children resting in these rooms.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The staff members Garda vetting's have been returned from the garda vetting bureau. All Garda vetting's that are due for renewal will be applied for at least three months in advance.
2. Water tempters will be checked daily with water tempter gage and recorded.
3. The bait box was removed from press- this was belonging to another company and was not an active. The new company has done another review of all bait boxes, and the old company has removed all their bait boxes

Infection Control:

4. Blue towel roll has been placed inside the dispenser for ease of use. Rooms using this bathroom- have been monitoring the storage of blue roll as well as the office carrying out spot checks
5. Room were provided with a new bin. Rooms were asked to ensure all bins where correctly working and if lid and pedal function was faulty to ensure the office was made aware of this and they will be replaced.

Safe Sleep:

6. Rooms were provided with new temp gauges to ensure they are monitored daily during sleep. A new recording sheet was introduced to all rooms. A staff meeting was conducted and follow up memo was put out to all staff to reshare the importance of reading the room temp

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting renewal for two staff submitted.
2. Photographic evidence of water tempters with new water temperature gages.
3. Photographic evidence of removal of bait boxes.

Infection Control:

4. Photographic evidence of appropriate storage of blue paper towels submitted.
5. Photographic evidence of new bins submitted.

Safe Sleep:

6. Staff memo that was sent to staff submitted where all non-compliances were discussed including sleep checks.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of attendance record books in each room recorded the times of entry and departure for each preschool child.

(3) (a)(b) An authorised person granted entry to the inspectors on arrival to the service. Identification was checked and contact details recorded. A logbook included the visit of all contractors, unpaid workers and visitors to the service.

(4) The person in charge is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain these records for the period set out in regulation.

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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)
The registered provider demonstrated with certification that four adults were trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) for children. A review of the roster demonstrated that there was a person with first aid for children available at all times to the children attending the service.

(2) (a) (b)
First aid boxes sufficiently resources with suitable equipment were stored in a conspicuous position available to children as required.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(a) of sound and stable structure,
(b) safe and secure,
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

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Compliance Information

- (a) The service was maintained in an appropriate and adequate state of repair.
- (b) The entrance into the service and the outdoor play areas were adequately secured to prevent a child exiting and an unauthorised person entering the premises.
- (c) The playrooms were adequately lit, ventilated, and heated.
- (e) The sanitary facilities were adequate for the needs and requirements of the children attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) The registered provider did not always ensure the premises was maintained in good repair and in a clean condition as was observed by the following
1. On the day of inspection, a number of water taps in the children's sanitary area were observed to be coated with rust.
 2. The area of the wall in the bright stars room was observed to be peeling and chipping.
 3. A number of the ventilation vents were observed to have accumulated a significant amount of dust which required cleaning.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Taps in bathrooms were replaced. Management will ensure close monitoring of all sanitary areas.
2. The area was treated with a PVC based paint-and will be painted. To ensure all areas that are peeling are treated straight away.
3. The vents were cleaned and dusted. This has been added into the cleaning rota with our external cleaners- and this will be checked by office staff to ensure work is being carried out.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of new tap submitted.
2. Photographic evidence of repaired wall submitted.
3. Photographic evidence of vents cleaned and indoor checklist with vents added.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 has been adequately addressed.