

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY005			
Name of Service:	Abacus Montessori & Creche			
Address of Service:	21 Riverdale, Oranmore, Co. Galway			
Eircode:	H91 K462			
Name of Registered Provider:	Aideen Cruise			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	07/07/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	31
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway. H91 ER2D.			
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel			
Title:	Early Years Inspector			

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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).

Description of service

Abacus Montessori and Creche is a private early years care and education service in operation since 2018, providing a full day care service which also caters for children attending on a part-time and sessional basis. While registered for children aged from 0 – 6 years of age, children currently attending are aged from 6 months – 6 years. Daily opening hours are from 07:30 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. The service is open for 51 weeks of the year. There is an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, which is facilitated over 38 weeks, school term time only, from 09:00 to 12:00.

The service operates from a purpose-built premises which is located in a residential housing estate in the village of Oranmore in County Galway. There are four care rooms in operation namely- Tweenies, Playschool, Junior Pre-school and Pre-school. There is a dedicated sleep room and adult and children's sanitary facilities are available along with children's changing areas. A secure outdoor play area is located at the rear of the service and car parking is available at the front.

Staffing

There are 12 staff employed in the service, 11 of whom were working in the service including the area manager, manager and registered provider.

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:

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- 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16 Records in Relation to Pre-school Service part (k) Accidents/Incidents/Injuries. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the following rooms; Tweenies, Playschool and Pre-school where a total of 11 records were reviewed.

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, area manager, 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.

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

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The manager was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The staff roster indicated that either the designated person in charge or named person were on the premises while the early years children were present.
 - (c) The roles and responsibilities of the staff members were visible in the reception area of the service.
- (2) Recruitment files and the staff roster indicated that there were six adults employed since the last inspection

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on 28 August 2024. Therefore, these six files were reviewed. In addition, garda vetting for three existing adults whose garda vetting required renewal were also reviewed.

- (a) Ten of the 12 required written and validated references were from past employers.
- (b) The remaining 2 of 12 written and validated references were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the six adults employed since the last inspection. In addition, three garda vetting disclosures which required renewal for three existing staff members were also on file demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Overseas police vetting was available for three of the adults for whom they were required, who had resided outside the State for a period of six consecutive months or longer as adults.
- (4) Staff files viewed on the day indicated that four of the six adults employed to work directly with the children had obtained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education ranging from at least Level 5 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications and the remaining two adults had a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.
- (7)
- (a) Documentation was on file to evidence that induction had taken place for the six new adults who had commenced employment in the service; details included the policies, procedures and statements of the service.

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.*

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Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in attendance in the service.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were met. There were 31 children in attendance with 10 adults in both the morning and in the afternoon.
- (8)
- (a) The registered provider ensured that there were two adults on the premises while the early years children were present.

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:
- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
 - (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
 - (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
 - (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
 - (e) the facilities available;
 - (f) the opening hours and fees;
 - (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
 - (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
 - (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
 - (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.
- (3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the two new staff members were available in the staff recruitment files in the office.
 - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service was registered to provide were available on the Tusla Registration Certificate displayed on the notice board in the reception area and Abacus Policies and Procedures.
 - (c) The details of the adult to child ratios were available on page 8 of the Abacus Policies and Procedures.
 - (d) (e) (f) The type of care programme available, facilities, opening hours and fees were detailed on page 8 of Abacus Policies and Procedures.
 - (g) The services policies and procedures, required for Regulation 10, were available in the Abacus Policies and Procedures.
 - (i) The staff roster was noted to have been completed daily with each adult's hours of work and lunch break recorded.
 - (k) Eleven accident/incident forms, from across the 4 care rooms, recorded from 11/11/2025 to 02/07/2026 were reviewed. These were found to contain all the particulars required.
- (3) The records referred to above were open to review on the premises.

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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

Compliance Information

Basic needs:

- Staff ensured that children were dressed appropriately for the weather outdoors. Children from the Tweenies area were dressed in waterproofs early in the morning. Children in the Pre-school care room were observed having sun cream applied by an adult and children from the Playschool care room were offered sun hats by the adult in the outdoor play area mid-morning.
- Handwashing was observed after toileting, coming in from outdoor play and before the eating of food.
- Children were observed accessing the toilets independently from the Junior Pre-school and Playschool areas. Adults were available to assist and provide reminders of handwashing.
- Nappy changing in the Tweenies and Playschool care rooms was carried out regularly and as required with staff heard being sensitive to the children's individual needs.
- Staff members provided physical comfort when children became upset. An example included a child who crashed their balance bike in the outdoor area and was crying. The staff member gave the child a cuddle and used soothing tones when talking to the child.

Supporting children's relationships:

- Staff members sat with the children at the tables and on the ground in both the indoor and outdoor area participating in activities and encouraging social conversation. They were heard listening intently to their conversations and using strategies to extend their thinking and learning. These included using open ended questions, explanations and providing feedback on activities.
- Learning, discovery and development books, put together by staff, in the Tweenies care room were available which documented each child's learning and development while in the setting. These included photographs, artwork and observations.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by staff, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement with staff heard praising children in the indoor and outdoor areas.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The Tweenies, Playgroup, Junior Pre-school and Pre-school areas were laid out clearly in divided areas which were equipped with developmentally appropriate play materials, toys and equipment which offered play and learning opportunities for the children attending.

- Tables and chairs, suitable for the age and stage of the children, were available in each area. An example included the children's wooden chairs in the Tweenies room having high sides in order that the children could sit safely while eating.
- There was sufficient space available for each child to explore the environment in each care room.
- Play materials and toys were positioned on low-level shelving in trays and baskets in the care rooms providing easy access and choice while promoting independence.

There was an outdoor play area in use at the rear of the service directly accessible from both the Junior Pre-school and Playschool areas providing an alternative change of environment for all of the children.

- The area was divided by barriers into developmentally appropriate play resources and materials for the older and younger children. Examples included younger children, from the Tweenies area, observed sitting on the safety tiles enjoying direct access to a turtle covered sand tray where they were observed enjoying sand play with buckets and spades. Children from the Pre-school and Junior Pre-school areas were observed practicing gross motor skills including running, jumping, cycling, steering, balance and coordination on a tractor, balance bikes, balance beam, slide, tyres and scooters.
- Children from Pre-school care room were observed engaged with adults in age and stage appropriate games including X and O and hand and eye coordination of standing a distance away from a goal and

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aiming a bean bag into a box, there was great excitement and enjoyment observed by the children during these activities.

- A planting area was visible. A staff member from the Pre-school care room stated the children and adults were involved in planting lettuce, cabbage and parsley which was growing there. The area was well set out and was inviting to look at.
- Imaginary play was available from the playhouse and mud kitchens and sensory play was available from sand and water trays in use in the area.
- Mark making materials including chalk were available and children were observed drawing on the wall panels and on the safety tiles.
- Language and literacy was observed with a staff member in the Tweenies care room heard reading a story of “That is not my princess” and staff in the Tweenies reading “The very funny farm”. Chairs in the Playschool care room were labelled with children’s photographs as were children’s personal belongings including bags and jackets. Children in the Playschool care room were heard singing in Spanish and naming colours and numbers in Irish.
- Additional resources including wheelbarrows, spades, vehicles and watering cans were available in a large storage box in the outdoor area if requested by the children.

(b) Rest facilities were available on the premises for all of the children.

- There was a designated cot room located off the Playschool care room with 3 cots, these were fitted with waterproof mattress protectors and were placed 50 centimetres apart. Each cot was supplied with a cellular blanket.
- The Playschool care room was in use as a sleep room after lunch with 3 children under 2 years on floor beds and 3 children over 2 years on floor mats of more than 6 centimetres. Each piece of sleep equipment had a fitted sheet and cellular blanket.
- Each care room had a rest/quiet area, with age and stage appropriate soft furnishings, where the children could sit away from noisy activities. These consisted of soft furnishings including vinyl sofas with soft cushions. Children who did not wish to rest were facilitated in the care rooms and in the outdoor play areas.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service promoted healthy eating, with food and snacks observed being provided at regular intervals throughout the day.

- The service provided breakfast between 8.00 am and 9.00 am consisting of oat and wheat-based cereals and toast. Morning snacks in the Pre-school care room served at 10:10 were observed to consist of a platter of mixed fruit, cheese strings, yogurts, crackers and rice cakes. In the afternoon ham and cheese wraps were available from 3:00 pm for a snack.
- A hot lunch of chicken curry and vegetables, which was freshly made in the service that morning, was served at 11:45 am. Children who requested more food were facilitated, they were not rushed and the atmosphere at lunch time was happy and relaxed.
- The food was prepared appropriately for each age group with the Tweenies food being mashed. A bottle of cow's milk was stored in the fridge for one of the children and oat milk was available for a child with an allergy.
- Water was available in all care rooms and in the outdoor play areas, within easy reach of the children. Children were observed accessing their drinks from individual water bottles which were stored in trays and baskets.
- Appropriate cutlery and crockery were provided for each age group and staff stated that children who were hungry outside of scheduled mealtimes were accommodated.

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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:

- Cleaning agents in the sanitary areas were stored on high shelving out of reach of the children.
- The outdoor play area was secured with wide horizontal panelling and two gates fitted with safety devices, preventing unauthorised adults from being able to enter the area or children leaving the area unsupervised.
- Staff supervised hot spots in the outdoor area including slides to ensure the safety of the children climbing up and sliding down.

Infection Control:

- Staff serving food in the care rooms were observed wearing aprons and gloves to protect clothing and prevent the spread of germs.
- Children's personal belongings in the sanitary areas were stored in lidded boxes aiding in infection control.
- The sanitary areas had both natural and mechanical ventilation ensuring a supply of fresh air.
- Changing mats in the Tweenies and Playschool sanitary areas were sanitised after use, ensuring they were clean and hygienic for each nappy change.
- Pedal operated, lidded, lined and sealed bins were available for the disposal of nappies.
- Sweeping brushes were hung up preventing cross contamination.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was administered by a staff member from the Tweenies care room and witnessed by the area manager. The procedure was carried out in line with the services administration of medication policy and all details were documented.
- Temperature reducing medication was available in the event of an emergency. This was stored in its original container, out of reach of the children. It was dated 09/28.

Safe Sleep:

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- Ten-minute physical sleep checks of children in the designated cot room and Playschool sleep area were furnished to the inspector. These detailed the colour, position, breathing, room temperature and staff signature for each child.
- Cots, mats and floor beds were placed 50 centimetres apart, ensuring the safety of the sleeping children.
- Ambient lighting was in place in the Playschool sleep area ensuring staff could carry out the physical sleep checks.
- Blinds in the Playschool sleep area were secured with hooks, placed out of reach of the children.

Fire Safety:

- Fire extinguishers were secured with brackets to the wall in Playschool care room.
- Fires assembly point notices were visible in the service ensuring a safe space for the adults and children in the event of an emergency.