

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL275
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Name of Service:	Snowdrops Crèche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	29 Clonuske Park, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Pamela Ericson
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	23/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & E Saini
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Snowdrops Creche & Montessori is located in a converted domestic dwelling in a residential estate in Balbriggan, north Dublin. The service is registered to provide full time, part time and sessional pre-school care and education to children from 0 to 6 years. There are 4 care rooms in the service namely the Baby room (6-12 months), Wobbler room (1-2 years), Toddler room (2-3 years) and the Preschool room (3-4 years). The Baby room was not operational on the day of inspection. Two sleep rooms are available in the service one sleep room is located directly off the Baby room and a second sleep room is situated directly adjacent to the dining room. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service. The service operates from 07:30 am to 6pm Monday to Friday participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) from 09:10 am to 12:10 PM for 38 weeks of the year.

Staffing

There are 10 staff members employed in the service including the registered provider, eight staff work directly with the children. One staff member is employed to participate in catering duties and one staff member assists with housekeeping duties. Three students are currently allocated to the service for work experience as part of their childcare studies, one of whom works as a relief staff member when required.

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

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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, 25, 26 and 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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.

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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

(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 had a designated person in charge and named persons to deputise in their absence.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection and the registered provider was present in the service throughout the course of the inspection.

(2) The files for 13 adults were reviewed including the registered provider and the files for 3 students one of whom works as a relief member of staff in the service.

(a) The following references were available from a past employer.

One written reference was available for the registered provider.

Nineteen written and appropriately validated references were available.

(b) The following references were available from a source other than a past employer.

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One written reference was available for the registered provider.

Five written and appropriately validated references were available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 13 adults whose files were reviewed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 3 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 11 staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service including the registered provider 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.

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 unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- The Baby room was closed on the day of inspection.
- In the Wobbler room there were 4 children aged 1 year to 1 year 10 months being cared for by 1 adult.

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- In the Toddler room there were 5 children aged 2 years 1 month to 2 years 11 months being cared for by 1 adult.
- In the Preschool room there were 17 children aged 3 years 2 months to 5 years being cared for by 3 adults.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times. This was confirmed by the staff roster.

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;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

Compliance Information

(1)(h) A record was available and maintained of the children's attendance in the service on a daily basis.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) Curriculum Vitaes were not available as required for 2 staff members employed in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1) (a) Curriculum Vitaes for the two staff were emailed to the inspector.

Preventive Action

(1) (a) Update checklist for staff files on a monthly basis. Do a visual check of staff files against Tusla required information.

Supporting documentation submitted

Curriculum vitaes x2

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Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been adequately addressed.

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:

- There was a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere throughout the care rooms in the service. Children were observed to be comfortable in exploring their environments, familiar with routine and secure in their relationships with staff members. Staff members were responsive to children's needs and requests, demonstrated familiarity with children by recalling their preferences and provided comfort and encouragement to children regularly throughout the day while also meeting their basic needs.
- The service provides all meals and snacks to children attending the service on a full day care basis. The children attending the Wobbler room had their meals and snacks in the dining room adjacent to the care room. The staff members throughout the care rooms sat with the children while they ate encouraging conversation and promoting a social and relaxed atmosphere.
- The children's nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required the staff members were observed to engage with children warmly throughout the procedure. Children who were toilet trained used the toilet independently with support provided as needed.
- Comfortable rest areas comprising of soft mats, cushions and appropriately sized couches were provided in the care rooms should the children choose to take a break from activities during the day. Two separate sleep rooms were available in the service, one was located adjacent to the Baby room, and the second

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sleep room was situated beside the dining area on the ground floor. The children aged over 2 years attending the Toddler room slept on sleep mats on the floor of the care room after they had their dinner.

- In the preschool classroom, children experienced smooth and unhurried transitions thought the daily routine. Staff supported children with advance notice of changes and used familiar routines and cues to prepare them. Transitions between activities were well managed and responsive to the children's individual needs.

Supporting relationships around children:

- In all the care rooms the staff members were observed to be warm and kind to the children in their care. The children were very familiar with the educators and sought them out for support and guidance as they required it.
- Throughout the care rooms the children appeared confident and relaxed in their environment and were observed naturally forming small groups and engaging in a range of activities during the inspection.
- A welcoming atmosphere in the service was evidenced by staff members greeting children and parents and guardians in a friendly manner on their arrival to the service and when collecting their children. Parents and guardians were provided with the opportunity to exchange information about their children with the staff members at these times.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were well resourced with a broad range and quantity of equipment, toys and materials to extend the children's learning and support their development. The children in the care rooms demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The play materials and equipment were positioned at an accessible level for the children on open shelving which nurtured independence and facilitated choice.
- The Wobbler room provided clear floor space for the children to move freely. Push-along toys and stable props were available to support the children to engage in physical and gross motor activity through self-initiated movement. An adult's armchair was provided in this room to allow adults working with the children to sit, cradle or comfort the children as needed.
- The Wobbler room and the Toddler room were laid out with defined areas of interest including home areas with well-resourced kitchen to enable the children to extend their play, along with dolls with

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accessorial equipment for the children to extend their play ,construction materials , dress up , arts and crafts materials, jigsaws and a range of small world and table top materials to support all areas of development.

- A plentiful supply of books was provided in the care rooms and the children's language development was facilitated in each room through conversation, storytelling and singing.
- The preschool environment was observed to be welcoming, well organised and child centred. A variety of age-appropriate resources were accessible to children, supporting independent choice and play. Children's artwork and family wall were displayed at their level, promoting a sense of identity and belonging.
- An enclosed outdoor area was located to the rear of the service. The main section of the outdoor play area was surfaced with safety tiles. The children's gross motor play was supported through the provision of a climbing frame with a slide as well as a climbing frame with a raised platform where a steering wheel was available for the children to use. A construction area with hard hats and large construction blocks were supplied for the children to use in addition to a range of ride on toys. There was also a sheltered play area which was covered with artificial grass where children had access to a well-resourced home corner, large transport cars, garages, and large plastic building blocks. A further sheltered area to the side of the service contained a mud kitchen, a low-level sink, sand table and water wall for the children to enjoy sensory play experiences.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. Before dinner time in the Toddler room children had their shoes and upper outing clothing removed before they ate their dinner, when asked the staff member stated that this was being done to speed up the process of placing the children to sleep after they ate. This practice does not support the dignity of the children and is not child-led practice.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Basic needs:

1. Staff member has been informed this is not respectful practice and children have to remain fully clothed while having their dinner before their nap time. Staff member completely accepted this and since the day of inspection has changed this practice with the help of a floater who comes in during dinner time and preparation for nap time.

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Preventive Action

Basic needs:

1. Manager will provide a floater to help the staff member during the busy time of dinner and preparation for naps.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child has been adequately 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 front door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed and secure which reduced the risk of children exiting unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the outdoor space and premises.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being worn for each individual nappy change.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after nappy changing and using the toilet, and following messy play and outdoor play.
- 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.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

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- All children aged less than 2 years had access to and were observed sleeping in a standard cot provided in the sleep room adjacent to the dining room.
- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were being performed and documented on all sleeping children, noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern at the time of each check.

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.

Outing:

- The children attending the Preschool room were brought on an outing to a local play space on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A beanbag was present in the rest area of the Wobbler room which accommodates children aged 1 to 2 years. Beanbags are not permitted for use with children aged less than 2 years due to the risk of suffocation.
2. The water at both the sink in the Toddler room and in the sanitary area adjacent to the Toddler room was hot to touch and measured between 45.5 °C and 46 °C. This was a scald risk for the children in attendance.
3. A trailing cord from an electrical appliance was accessible in the playroom, creating a safety issue which posed risk to injury.
4. The inspector observed that on an outing there was no roll book taken resulting in an inability to verify the number of children present or access any emergency contact details for the parents. This action was against the services outing policy which details how staff should carry with them the emergency contact details at all times.

Infection Control:

5. The water in the nappy changing area on the ground floor of the service was cold. The temperature of the water measured 12.8 °C, cold water does not support effective hand washing.
6. In the Toddler room the children's blankets which they used at sleep time were stored on top of each other which is an infection control risk.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Bean bag has been moved to the Preschool room.
2. Electrician reduced the temperature of the hot water to 40 degrees.
3. The cord from the projector has been cut down to a smaller size and new trunking has been fitted to ensure there is no possibility of a trailing cable.
4. Outing backpack in place for staff to bring the roll book & first aid kit.

Infection Control:

5. A plumber came and assessed the sink and taps in the downstairs toilet he is booked in to come and fit new taps on Monday 25th of May.
6. Blankets for the toddlers' sleep are now stored in the children's individual baskets.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The use of bean bags will not be permitted in their baby and wobbler room.
2. Added water temperature check to service's weekly risk assessment checklist to ensure it remains at an appropriate level.
3. Staff members have been informed to make sure cable trunking remains secured.
4. Staff have been informed that they cannot go outside on any walk or outing without the outings backpack.

Infection Control:

5. Similar to 23.2 all sinks have been added to temperature checking on our risk assessment checklist.
6. Staff member was advised of the infection control risk and since the day of inspection has stored the blankets in the children's individual baskets.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been adequately addressed.

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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) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection.
- (2)(a) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped.
- (b) First aid boxes were safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, 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 firefighting 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 all fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated that the most recent fire drill was conducted on 03/03/2026.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in November 2025 and smoke alarms were serviced on 16/02/2026.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was in place for up to 35 children to attend the service on a full day basis, valid until 27 March 2026.