

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH162
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Name of Service:	Sandys Creche and Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Grange Hall, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A85 TK75
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Name of Registered Provider:	Sandra Rooney
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	4
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle
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

Sandys Creche & Montessori School is a privately owned early years service which is registered to accommodate children aged 2-6 years for sessional care and education during the hours of operation, 09:30am – 12:30pm Monday to Friday. The service operates from a 2-storey building located within walking distance of the town of Dunshaughlin Co. Meath and is one of two services owned by the registered provider. There are 2 care rooms in the service used for the care of the preschool children namely the Montessori/Playschool room 1 and the Montessori/Playschool room 2 in addition to a room which is used as a sensory room. Two separate outdoor play areas are located to the rear and the side of the service. The service is also registered for and provides school aged care.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a service manager to oversee the operational management of the service in addition to 6 staff members including a chef. The registered provider was present in the service during the inspection. One staff member post is part funded through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) scheme to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs during the ECCE sessions.

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.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11, 19, 23,25 and 26; 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 inspector wishes 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,*

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(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 a named person to deputise as required.

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

Seven staff files including the registered providers file were reviewed, one staff member is employed for catering duties only.

(2)(a) Eleven written and appropriately validated references were available from a past employer.

(b) Three written and appropriately validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 6 staff members including the registered provider whose files were reviewed.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 2 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The 6 staff members including the registered provider who work directly with the pre-school children in the service 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.

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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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

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 ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.
- In the Montessori/ Playschool room 1 there were 3 adults working directly with 12 children aged 3 years 4 months to 4 years 6 months.
 - In the Montessori/ Playschool room 2 there were 2 adults working directly with 19 children aged 4 years 5 months to 4 years 7 months.
- (8)(c) Not applicable as the service does not operate single handedly.

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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

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- On the inspector's arrival, the children attending the preschool rooms were actively engaged in meaningful play-based activities in both rooms of the service. The early years practitioners present were joining in with the children's play, providing encouraging and nurturing interactions to children and supporting them to locate and set up materials to extend their play. Children appeared comfortable and confident to make choices about their learning, and the adults were responsive to children's ideas and requests.
- The children brought their own morning snack with them to the service. The practitioners sat at each of the tables chatting to the children, with the interactions observed to be informative, educational and fun. The children's water bottles were available to them to enable them to take a drink throughout the session as they desired. The children who are present in the service until 1pm had chicken stew and mashed potatoes for dinner.
- The sanitary accommodation was located directly off the care rooms which facilitated the children to use the bathroom independently as needed. Discreet supervision and assistance were provided with children gently reminded to wash their hands afterwards.
- The children had access to comfortable rest areas in both care rooms where the children could choose to enjoy a rest as they desired.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The Early years practitioners demonstrated skilful interaction strategies to support the children's play, learning and development, as evidenced in occasions when the adults acted as a play partners with the children and supported the children's participation in their chosen activities.

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- The Early years practitioners and children were very familiar with each other, and the children were observed to seek out the practitioners for comfort and support as they required it. Practitioners were observed supporting children to interact positively with each other, helping children to develop social relationships with their peers and to diffuse any minor disputes that arose between the children.
- Parents and guardians were observed being welcomed by the practitioners at the children's departure from the service and the opportunity for updating parents and guardians regarding their children's day in the service was taken at this time.

Physical and material environment:

- The indoor environment in both care rooms was bright and visually appealing. The children's artwork was displayed on the walls; this supports children's wellbeing by feeling valued and appreciated. A family wall was positioned at the children's eye level in both care rooms which enabled the children to bridge the connection between the service and home.
- In both care rooms the play materials and equipment were displayed and readily accessible on low level shelving to promote the children's choice and independence when selecting their play activities. The children in the care rooms demonstrated familiarity with their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- Both care rooms were spacious which enabled the children to move around freely and were set up in clearly defined interest areas which were equipped with a broad range of developmentally appropriate play materials to support children's play and learning. The interest areas included home corners containing a range of resources for the children to extend their play including utensils and appliances in addition to dress up materials all of which facilitated the children's imaginary play experiences. Construction areas, transport toys, art resources and a broad range of tabletop materials including Montessori resources were available.
- A range of books were provided in both care rooms to support the children's language development.
- Sensory play was promoted in the service, and this was evidenced by the sand trays that were provided in both care rooms.
- There are 2 outdoor areas in the service accessible from both care rooms. The outdoor area immediately adjacent to the Montessori/ Playschool room 1 was roofed with plastic sheeting which provided shelter from rain and direct sunlight enabling the children to enjoy time outside regardless of the weather. The door between the care room and outdoor play area remained open throughout the morning which

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enabled the children to move freely between both the indoor and outdoor play area as they chose. The area was surfaced with artificial grass, a well-resourced play kitchen was provided in addition to a dome climber, a slide, a selection of transport toys and a range of tabletop materials. The outdoor area used by the children attending the Montessori / Playschool room was also surfaced with artificial grass, football goal posts were provided along with construction materials and transport toys. Both areas provided space for free movement and the children attending both care rooms enjoyed time outside on the day of inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

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

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The toys and equipment available to the children appeared in good condition with no safety hazards observed. Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.

Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be appropriately cleaned before and following meals and snacks.
- The children in the service were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were gently reminded, and assisted, when necessary, to wash their hands after using the toilet.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The records reviewed indicated that fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis to familiarise both adults and children of the procedures to follow in order to evacuate the premises in a safe manner.

Non-Compliance Information

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General Safety:

1. On the inspectors arrival to the service the front door was unlocked which increased the risk of unauthorised entry to the service and to children leaving the service unsupervised.

Infection Control:

2. In both care rooms the children's snacks which they brought with them from home and contained meat and dairy produce were stored in their bags and not stored under refrigerated conditions. This increased the risk of bacteria multiplying to levels which could result in illness.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The magnet on the door has now been fixed; the mechanism has now been replaced. Staff will ensure that the front door is checked regularly throughout the day and remains locked at all times to prevent unauthorized entry or children leaving unsupervised.

Infection Control:

2. Staff will ensure that all children's snacks containing meat or dairy are placed in the refrigerator on arrival each day to maintain safe storage temperatures and reduce the risk of bacterial growth.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photograph of door showing new locking mechanism.

Infection Control:

Photograph of lunches stored in fridge.

Summary Comment

The inspector has 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 certification provided for inspection.
- (2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and 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 fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 24/05/2026.
- (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 on the 29/07/2025 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 08/04/2026.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.