

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL147
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Name of Service:	Wonder Years ECCE Ltd
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Address of Service:	Rossbracken, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 TX99
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marcella McNamee
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	29/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	156	PM	120
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	N McEndoo, L Costello, S Killeen
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

Wonder Years Childcare Centre is privately owned and has been in operation since 2002. The service is registered for the provision of a full day care service for pre-school children aged 0 - 6 year. A school age service is also provided. The service operates weekdays from 6:00am to 5.30pm and includes a sessional service from 9.00.am to 12.00pm. The service lies in the rural townland of Rossbracken, eight kilometres outside the Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. The premises is set out over seven acres of land, which has been subdivided to create different outdoor play facilities for children. In the main building there are four care rooms on the ground floor and four care rooms on the first floor. There is a kitchen for preparing meals and snacks and the relevant ancillary facilities. The outdoor facilities consist of six garden rooms, each with their own sanitary facilities, garden and play area. There is a large purpose-built playground, a forest trail and an area available for growing fruit and vegetables. There are a further three standalone care rooms each with their own sleep room, sanitary facilities, and play area.

Staffing

There were 43 adults employed in the service on the day of inspection, including the manager and the registered provider, who were both available to staff in a supernumerary capacity throughout the day of inspection. Adults working directly with children held a relevant qualification in early childhood care and education.

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 the child, safety, premises and facilities. 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 the pre-school service, Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child and Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. A sample of 15 records were reviewed to evaluate compliance with Regulation 16(1)(k).

The scope of the inspection included the following rooms - Little Smarties, Clever Cats, Tommy Toddler, Tiny Tots, Kreative Kids, Little Stars, Junior Einstein, Rainbow Cottage 2 and Bluebell Cottage.

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.

Additional Information

1. A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of the child was issued to the registered provider on 29 May 2025.
2. A written response was submitted by the registered provider on 30th May 2025 outlining the measures taken to address the immediate concern.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (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 accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

2) (a) (b).

The service employed 42 adults. On the most recent inspection dated the 17th of October 2024, 36 adult files were reviewed. On this inspection the remaining 6 adults employed in the service were reviewed.

12 written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source in the absence of a

past employer, were available in respect of the 6 adults in the service.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 43 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)
International police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside of the state for a period of six months or more.

(4)
Five adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement

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) There were 33 adults working directly with 156 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation. The registered provider and person in charge also worked directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.

2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

Name of Room	Age range of children	Number of Children	No of Adults
Little Smarties	1-2 years	9	2
Clever Cats	1	8	2
Tommy Toddler	14 Months	8	2

Tiny Tots	Under 1- 1 year	6	2
Kreative Kids	3 years	14	2
Little Stars	3-4 Years	16	3
Junior Eistein	2-4 Years	12	2
Rainbow cottage 1	4 -5 years of age	9	1
Rainbow Cottage 2	3- 5 years of age	9	2
Sliabh Beg 2	4-5 years of age	9	2
Sliabh Beg 1	3 – 5 years of age	7	1
Tir na Nog 1	3- 5 years of age	9	2
Tir na Nog 2	3 – 5 years of age	8	1
Bluebell Cottage	1- 3 years of age	11	2
Primrose cottage	2- 3 years of age	11	2
Dancing Dandelions	2-3 years of age	10	2

In the afternoon at 14.39 the following number of children and adults were present in the service.

Name of Room	Age range of children	Number of Children	No of Adults
Little Smarties	1-2 years	9	2
Clever Cats	1	7	2
Tommy Toddler	14 Months	8	2
Tiny Tots	Under 1- 1 year	4	2
Kreative Kids	3 years	11	2
Little Stars	3-4 Years	12	3
Junior Eistein	2-4 Years	13	2
Rainbow cottage 1	4 -5 years of age	6	1
Rainbow Cottage 2	3- 5 years of age	5	1
Tir na Nog 1	3-5 years of age	7	1
Tir na Nog 2	3-5 years of age	6	1
Bluebell Cottage	1-3 years of age	11	2
Primrose cottage	2-3 years of age	11	2
Dancing Dandelions	2-3 years of age	10	2

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (k)

A sample of 15 records were available on file detailing any accidents, injuries or incidents involving a pre-school child attending the service.

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)

- There was adequate nutritional food and snacks supplied on the day of the inspection. The children were observed eating rice, pepper beef, with sauce, vegetables and potatoes. A supply of suitable crockery and cutlery was available to the children during meals. A drink station with individually labelled drinking cups were available to the preschool children throughout the session.
- The playrooms were observed to be comfortable and inviting, providing a suitable and engaging space for pre-school children. Child-sized tables and chairs were appropriately provided to support age-appropriate activities. A soft mat area was available for babies, enhanced with overhead lights and artwork affixed to the ceiling to stimulate visual engagement while lying down. Rooms also featured ball pit, and a variety of soft play equipment designed to encourage climbing and support gross motor development. A cozy library area was present, and staff were observed reading to the children after lunch and before rest time, promoting language development and a calm atmosphere.

- All rooms had opportunities for all types of play including, imaginary, sensory, creative, challenging and opportunities for risk taking. Resources included home corners, construction areas, tuff trays, sand boxes, tables top activities, and puzzles for fine motor activities. There was easy access to the fully enclosed outside areas throughout the day. In the garden pod areas of the service, children moved freely between both indoors and outdoors. Other children were observed to access the large outdoor play areas that run the perimeter of the main building, providing an alternative change of environment for them. Opportunities were provided for challenge and safe risk with climbing apparatus, hills, swings, and tyres. Children were observed engaging in energetic play in all the outdoor areas which were purposely designed to ensure that the children could be kept within sight and sound of the staff.
- Free movement of the children was facilitated in the daily routine of the service. Short periods of adult initiated activities were interspersed with free play so that children could choose their own activity and move between the different interest areas in the room at their leisure. Children's need for rest was also appropriately accommodated in the care rooms. Rest areas were available in the older children's room with soft mapping and large cushions. There was designated sleep areas for the younger children.
- Children were supported and encouraged to take responsibility for their personal care, in ways that match their individual level of independence. This included toileting, wiping their noses, dressing themselves and tidying away after work or play activities. The service fostered an understanding of healthy habits such as regular handwashing and using clean tissues when required. Staff were at hand to guide and support when necessary. Parents supplied spare clothes which were individually labelled in each child's room. Protective plastic aprons were available for messy play thereby further promoting personal care.
- Staff in the care rooms were attentive and caring in their approach and interacted well with the children. They were observed coming down to their eye level and kept up the flow of conversation with them throughout the session. Children were observed to be praised and encouraged as they engaged in different activities. Nappy changing was observed on the day of inspection to be a pleasurable experience with staff talking and singing to the younger children.
- Children were offered a sense of belonging through the provision of individually named places for their personal belongings and by displays of artwork and photos of each child with their families. Children were enabled to engage positively with each other and were encouraged to be helpful, to take turns and share play resources with other children.

- Good teamwork was observed, staff worked well together, linking in with each other and ensuring information was documented. Good communication from staff was further observed when parents came to collect children from their care rooms.

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:

- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Cleaning products, equipment and storage facilities were kept inaccessible and out of the reach of children.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall fencing and bolted gates.
- Grapes were observed to be cut, reducing the risk of choking to the child.
- All toys and play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, were observed to be safe for the pre-school children using them and in a good state of repair.
- Window restrictors on the windows were present to prevent accidental falls.

Infection Control:

- There were adequate handwashing facilities available throughout the service, equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, and paper towels. Children were observed washing their hands regularly, including before snacks and meals, demonstrating good hygiene practices. Child-friendly handwashing posters with pictorial instructions were displayed above wash basins to support children's independence and understanding.
- The materials and resources throughout the service appeared to be visually clean.
- Foot-operated pedal bins were provided in all areas for the safe and hygienic disposal of waste.
- Cot and bed linens, including sheets and blankets, were laundered daily on-site.
- Soothers were stored hygienically in individual, clearly labelled containers for each child.
- Cleaning schedules were in place and maintained, staff were observed cleaning the care room after the children had finished their lunch.

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with staff in the pre-school rooms staff informed the inspector of a child on medication. Staff were aware of instructions and storage requirements of the medication. On review of the medication, it was stored in a restricted area and stored as per manufacturer's instructions.
- Medication administration records are kept by the service and were available on the day of inspection for review.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had seven designated sleep rooms, each equipped with appropriate cots and floor beds to accommodate the needs of pre-school children.
- The staff were observed on the day of inspection completing 10-minute checks on the younger children and logging the required information.
- Room temperature in the sleep rooms was kept at the appropriate level for each aged group of children. Using fans and opening of windows, enabling the air to circulate in the care rooms.

Fire Safety:

- A Fire Evacuation plan was displayed on the wall in each room.
- All exits remained free from obstruction on the day.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- 1) On the day an external door leading to two of the care rooms was unsecure which posed a risk of unauthorised access to the service. An immediate action notice was issued on the day.
- 2) There was a trailing wire present in one of the sleep rooms which the preschool child could access. A tree in the stars Room had lights hanging down which the preschool children could access and posed a risk. It is acknowledged that when brought to the attention of staff they were removed immediately.
- 3) An internal fire door in a sleep room was being obstructed from closing fully due to door wedge placed below.

Infection Control:

- 4) There were 10 mattresses in two of the sleep rooms that did not have water protective covers on them. This posed a risk of cross contamination.
- 5) A foot operated pedal bin in one of the sanitary areas had no lid, posing an infection control risk.
- 6) A child size couch in one of the care rooms which was made of cloth material was heavily soiled and was not cleaned effectively.

- 7) During nappy changing staff did not adhere to the service procedure. Hand washing of young children was inconsistent following the nappy changing process. This posed an infection control risk.

Safe Sleep:

- 8) One of the sleep rooms did not have adequate lighting. The children were not easily visible when performing sleep checks. Sleep areas are required to have ambient lighting in accordance with best practice guidance.
- 9) On the day of inspection, a child under the age of 2 years was observed to be sleeping on a stackable bed. These beds are not suitable for children under two years. In accordance with best practice guidance a sleep plan is required for children under 2 years of age that do not sleep in cots. On discussion with staff no sleep plan was available for this child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. We have installed keypad entries to all doors. The keypad entries will only allow permitted access even if the doors are unlocked
2. Both leads were removed immediately when notified by inspectors. Educators have all been re-informed of the risk of trailing leads.
3. Wedge has been removed so door can be fully closed. Educators have been reminded of the importance of ensuring fire doors remain closed and unobstructed

Infection Control:

4. Mattresses protectors on the day were out for washing and have since been replaced. 50 new mattress protectors have been purchased to ensure a replacement is always available when washing is due.
5. Bin was removed immediately. New pedal bins were purchased on same day to replace any broken bins.
6. Childs sofa was removed and discarded on same day. A new washable sofa has since been purchased to replace the old one.
7. Educators were reminded of the importance of handwashing of all children after handwashing. New signage has been put up in all sanitary areas to remind educators.

Safe Sleep:

8. All coverings have been removed from viewing panels on doors to allow more natural lighting in. Educators have been instructed to keep viewing panels clear at all times and turn on lamps during sleep time.

9. Cots have been added to the cottage sleep rooms for children who have not yet reached 2 years old. A sleep plan template has been provided to all rooms with children aged under 2 in the event a parent requesting the child be moved to a bed. All sleep rooms for the 2-year-old rooms have since had additional cots included.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

8. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

This regulation is now complaint. The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. The practice will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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) (b)

The service demonstrated that a staff held in date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and were always available to the children while in the service.

(2) (a) (b)

A fully stocked first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location in the service and available to the children as required.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance for the number of children in attendance. The insurance certificate was observed to be valid until 27 March 2026